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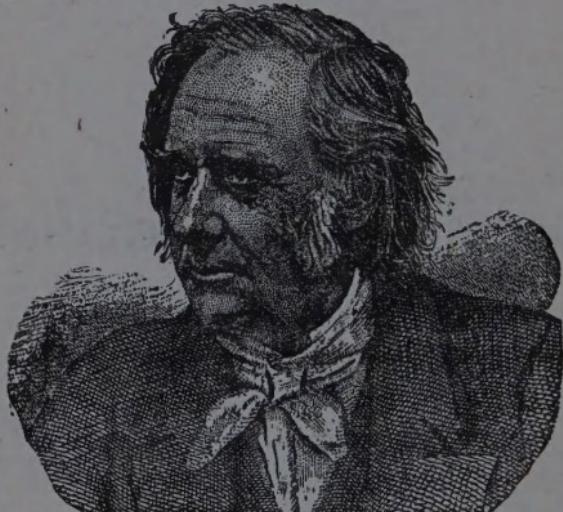
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MAN AND THE GOSPEL.

In Trial.

"My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations."—ST. JAMES i. 2.

THERE is an old story of two knights who fell into a quarrel, almost into a combat, about a shield—the one asserting, and prepared with his sword to maintain, that the shield was made of gold; the other as positively asserting that it was not gold but silver. Both were right; and there was no more occasion for quarrel between them than there has often been between good men in religious controversy. Looking at a doctrine from different points of view, not having the same *stand-point*, as it is called, they quarrelled; and the quarrel was a mistake. These two knights saw one and the same shield; but looking on it from opposite sides, each saw a different face; this was of silver, that of gold.

Like that shield, the word temptation, as used in Holy Scripture, has to be regarded under two aspects. It has two meanings; and unless care be taken to distinguish the one from the other

we may fall into a very serious mistake. Sometimes temptation is employed as another word for afflictions, trials ; at other times in a sense so different, that, instead of counting it all joy, we should dread nothing more than to fall into divers temptations. Whatever is calculated to inflame our corruptions, and has a tendency, from its own nature and ours, to seduce us into sin, is temptation ; and it is in this sense the word is used when it is said, "Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God : for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man. But every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his lust, and is enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin ; and sin when it is finished bringeth forth death."

In this, the most common sense of the word, to fall into temptation, is often, notwithstanding our best and strongest resolutions, to fall into sin. Such is the weakness of our nature ! and how can that, which leads in so many cases to sin, ever be an occasion of joy ? Who would keep his body under, as the apostle says, who would be temperate in all things, who would hold the old man nailed to the cross, who would mortify the flesh with its affections and lusts, who would keep his marriage garment unspotted of the world, will not throw himself into the arms of temptation, but rather shrink from it with fear and dread. He will go out of his way to avoid temptation, as he would the road frequented by a ravening lion, a house or street where coffins were rife, and the plague was raging. "He fell among thieves," is true of him who falls into divers temptations ; and

he would often die under his wounds, but for Him who drew His own portrait in the picture of the good Samaritan. Beset by robbers and assassins, he may conquer through divine strength, but he has a hard fight for it, nor comes out of the battle without some wounds to heal.

"Stand in awe, and sin not;" "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation," are warnings which no good man should disregard. Is this to be a coward? Anything else were the height of rashness. Who sleeps by a magazine of gunpowder needs to take care even of sparks; who walks on slippery ice, let him not go star-gazing, but look to his feet, and take care of falling. Whatever provokes to sin, though beautiful as Bathsheba,—what is in its nature calculated, and by the cunning fiend intended to draw us into transgression,—is a danger against which we cannot be too much upon our guard. Though in themselves innocent, pleasures are sought at too great hazard that grow on a dizzy crag, or among the grass where adders creep, or in the lofty crevice of some tottering wall, or on the brink of a swollen flood; and all the more if, such as our poet describes:

"Pleasures are like poppies spread,
We nip the flower, the bloom is fled;
Or, like the snow-flake on the river,
A moment white, then gone forever."

The language of joy is praise: but when a man is passing through temptation, the time is not for praise but prayer; it is for sighs, much more than songs; for strong crying, and tears, and holy fears; for deep horror, and the drawn sword that gleamed in the hand of Christian, as, amidst spectral forms,

hideous sights and sounds, he trode the Valley of the Shadow of Death. Count it all joy? Who consults his soul's peace, purity, and safety, instead of counting it all joy to fall into divers temptations, will do his utmost to avoid them; his constant, daily, earnest prayer, "Lead me not into temptation;" and when he falls into it, his cry—St. Peter's on the sea,—“Save me, I perish!”—that of one with the coils of a monstrous snake contracting round his form, “Make haste unto me, O God, thou art my help and my deliverer; O Lord, make no tarrying.”

It is in an old, but now rather uncommon, use of the word that we are to understand temptation, as used by St. James when he says, “Count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations.” It stands there for what in common language we call trials;—those troubles from which the best no more than the worst are exempt; the bitter ingredients that mingle with every man's cup; the cup that is found in every man's sack; the sufferings that, in some form or other, are ever occurring between the cradle and the grave, and that chequer a life which at birth begins with a cry, and at death ends with a groan. And what a grand faith is that which glories in these tribulations! The world, a cold philosophy tell us to bear what we cannot throw off, stoutly to face what we cannot shun, and, like one who holds his breath and sets his teeth to some painful operation, to endure what we cannot cure. How divine the faith which, thrusting these cold comforters aside, comes to the mourner weeping by the coffin, visits the captive pining in his dun-

geon, stands by the martyr bound to his stake to say, "Glory in tribulations"—"Blessed is the man that endureth temptation, for when he is tried he shall receive the crown of life which the Lord hath promised to them that love him!" Since trials more or less painful are the lot of all, God's people should learn how to bear them.

In Old Testament times Christianity was in the opening bud; now it is in the full-blown flower. Sustained then by types and symbols, it was the eaglet when the mother stirs her nest and bears it on her wings; now a full-feathered eagle with her foot on the rock, and her far-piercing eye on the sun, she springs upwards to cleave the parting clouds and soar high above them. Still, though without our advantages, these Old Testament saints present remarkable instances, among other graces, of resignation; and as we see the trees in early spring living, standing, though autumn blasts and winter frosts have stripped off all their leaves, we see in these patriarchs how stoutly faith in God can stand when trials have robbed life of every green joy, and the days come, of which he says, "I have no pleasure in them," the poor sufferer would be happy with his head beneath the sod, to sleep where the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest. What an illustrious example of this was Job, when deep answered unto deep at the noise of God's waterspouts! Billow after billow went over him; he goes down, never as it seemed to rise again; but faith cannot drown, and how wonderful to see his head emerge, and, as he looks around on the desolation, fortune and family ingulfed, to hear him say, "The Lord

giveth, and the Lord taketh away, blessed be the name of the Lord ;” or, “Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him ;” He has slain mine, my sons, my daughters, my joys and hopes, all are dead and gone ; now let Him slay not mine but me also, yet will I trust in Him. What faith ! What sublime resignation ! And would we, now suffering under trials, bear them, or, having to suffer, would we meet them with like submission, we must learn to yield to, not to resist God’s will.

Strive to enter in at the strait gate,—at all cost and hazard ; let sinners strive after conversion—to be in Christ ; but strive not, impatient of trials, to get out of them. If, like many, you are “bound in affliction,” it will do you no good to fret against it ; that will but make the iron cut deeper into the flesh. The yoke sits easiest on the neck of the patient ox ; and he feels his chain the lightest who does not drag but carry it. Bow before the trial, as I have read travellers do when overtaken in the desert by the dreadful simoom. The Simoom ! When that cry rises, striking terror into the boldest hearts, and the purple haze sweeps on, which to breathe is death, they make no attempt to fly—the swiftest Arab scours not the desert like the wing of this scourge—but, instantly, they throw themselves on the ground ; every head is muffled ; and there, low in the dust, trembling, dumb, in awful silence they lie, and let the poisonous wind blow over them. “ Hide thee in the dust,” hide thee in the dust, is the voice of God in our calamities ; and the lower we lie there before Him, passive under His mighty hand, yielding to His

sovereign will, we shall suffer the less when days of darkness come.

To take an illustration from more familiar scenes, we should meet life's trials as we do the billows, to which Scripture so often compares them. When the foaming breaker comes rolling in, meet it erect, with bold front, defiant of its strength, and, sweeping you off your feet, it hurls you among the seething water. We have tried it ; and, all but suffocated, have risen, lacerated and bleeding, from the flinty beach. But meet the billow bent, stoop to its foaming crest, bow before its power, and, roaring, it passes harmlessly over your head ; and, as the waves neither come so fast, nor stay so long, but there is time to breathe between them, by this simple art you stand like a rock, and see the proudest billows burst foaming on the beach. A blessed art this, when deep is answering unto deep, and all God's waves and billows go over us ! Who, seizing every opportunity to pray, bends to trials, breaks them—and is least stunned by the rudeness of their shock. And thus it is, perhaps, that Christians of a gentle spirit, by nature as well as grace more pliant than defiant, that women, by their constitution less tough and more ready to bend, have more passive courage, often bear troubles better than stout men ; they let the wave go over them, not fighting against God, but saying with Christ, "Father, not my will, but thine, be done ;" or with Eli, "It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good."

Again, the sight of God in his trials greatly helps a good man to bear them. The nearer we get to God in times of trouble, the less their pain and the

greater our profit. The son who, seeking to escape correction, stands at arm's length struggling to get away, feels the full power of the rod ; but light falls the stroke on him who, confessing, "I am afflicted far less than my iniquities deserve ; I will be dumb, opening not my mouth, because thou didst it," flies to his father's bosom, and falls penitent at his feet. It happens in the spiritual as in the natural world, that the farther from him who strikes the heavier, and the nearer to him who strikes, the lighter falls the blow. Consider this, besides, that God never strikes his people with both hands ; for who has ever sought Him in their trouble, drawn near to him in deep affliction, but found that if He was strong to smite, He was strong also to support ? Did you ever see a father beating a son who resisted ? He holds the boy with one hand, and he smites him with the other. It is not so God corrects a penitent, loving child. While one hand is employed to strike, what does He with the other ? They who draw near to Him crying, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him," ever find the other employed not to hold, but to uphold them. Wiping away the tears the rod starts in their eyes, pouring balm into the wounds His hand inflicts, sustaining while He smites, kissing while He corrects, He teaches His people that trials are the badge of sonship. "Whom he loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth."

But submission is not the highest lesson taught in the school of trial. That school has higher instruction and nobler prizes. It is a great thing to learn submission ; but it is a grand thing to rejoice in, and rejoice over our afflictions, as St Paul did ;

and St James says we are to “count it all joy when we fall into divers trials.” Why not? why should that language surprise us? why should we start at it? why hear it with an incredulous ear, if seasons of trial are the occasions of drawing out the tenderest love of God? Why not, if they correspond to the sick-bed and sick-chamber, where we get into the innermost circle of domestic affections? By the anxiety all show for our recovery; by the midnight watching at our bed; by no trouble grudged, but sleep, and rest, and pleasure, and everything sacrificed for us; by the noiseless step and gentle whispers; by the cloud that darkens every brow when physicians look grave, and our case looks worse; by the joy that sits on every face when we are better; by a thousand little kind attentions that, never thought of in the day of health, come out shining like stars at night, we now know how precious we are to others, how much we are valued, how tenderly loved. It is almost worth being ill to know this, and receive the kindnesses that our illness calls out. Is that a set-off to thy pains of sickness? How many of the Lord’s people have had this to set against their sorest trials, that they never felt nearer to God, and God never drew nearer, nor dealt so kindly with them, as when they were cast into darkness and the deeps—their affliction abounded, but then their consolations much more abounded. It was on the mount where it lightened and thundered that God showed them His glory. It was in the wilderness that water gushed from the smitten rock and they ate of angels’ food; that the pillared cloud was seen by day, the pillared fire by night. It was when their

bark was tempest-tossed, and the sky was dark, and the sea was rough, that Christ came walking on the billows to still the tempest, to subdue their fears. Can they ever forget how then and there He fulfilled the gracious promises—"When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee, and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee ; thou shalt walk through the fire, and not be burned ; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee. Fear not, for I am with thee. For I am the Lord thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour."

But, as I have said, the child of God has joy not only in trials, but through them ; and for this, among other reasons, because they prove the genuineness of his faith—they are the trying of your faith, as an apostle calls them.

There was a British regiment once ordered to charge a body of French cuirassiers. The trumpets sounded, and away they went boldly at them ; but not to victory. They broke like a wave that launches itself against a rock. They were sacrificed to traders' fraud. Forged not of truest steel, but worthless metal, their swords bent double at the first stroke. What could human strength, or the most gallant bravery, do against such odds ? They were slaughtered, like sheep on the field. And ever since I read that tragedy, I have thought I would not go to battle unless my sword were proved. I would not go to sea with anchors that had never been tried. But of all things for a man's comfort and peace, what needs so much to be proved as his faith—its truth and genuineness ? Any way, it is a serious thing to face death, and meet the King of Terrors on his own ground ; but were our faith

never tried till we stood face to face in the valley with our last enemy, face to face with our God at the bar of judgment, it were still more serious. With our powers of self-deception—with Satan sitting at the sinner's ear, saying, Peace, peace, when there is none to be found—with so many who have the form of godliness, but are strangers to its power, the stoutest heart might tremble for the issues. Before I go down to battle, I want to know if my sword is forged of trusty steel ; before I go to sea, I want to know if my anchor is hammered out of the toughest iron ; before I set out on my journey, I want to know if this is sterling money,—is it genuine ? has it the ring of true metal ? will it stand the test ? So long as it is fair weather, I want to know if my hopes rest on sand or on solid stone ; when rains descend, and waters rise, and winds blow, and beat on my house, it may be too late to know the truth. I want to know it now ;—now, when, if I should have been building on the sand, there is time to seek in Christ the Rock of Ages, a foundation that cannot be moved. It is of the utmost importance to have our faith tested ; and God's people, therefore, have cause to bless Him, and do bless Him, for the trials that have put it to the test, and proved it true.

If like the treading of camomile, or the crushing of a sweet-scented plant, that bathes in odors the hand that bruises it, or the burning of incense that draws out its latent perfumes, your trials have called forth heavenliness of mind, child-like submission to God's sovereign will, strong trust in His providence, a ready willingness to bear your cross for the honor of Him that bore His cross for you, count it all joy

when ye fall into divers trials. They have equipped you for future battles, and furnished you with recollections and experiences to disarm the greatest evils. His presence with you in the past is a pledge of His presence in the future ; that He will be with you through whatever troubles, great or small, you have to go—with you always—with you even unto the end. Not one that has never been tried when days of darkness come, you can “remember the years of the right hand of the Most High.” Why should you be dismayed? You stand on the vantage-ground of David, when, the host reeling back with terror, and Saul attempting to dissuade him from meeting the Philistine, he stood calm, collected, and, eyeing the giant, said, “He that delivered me from the paw of the lion and the paw of the bear, shall he not also deliver me from the hand of this Philistine?” Let the past throw its shadow, or its light rather, on the future. “That which is to be hath already been ;” for “our God is the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness nor shadow of turning.” Courage, then ! go forward ! and as in days gone by, the favor of God shall be your shield, and the joy of the Lord your strength.

Some bear their sufferings as, if we are to believe the stories we have read, the Indian bears his tortures. Tied to the stake, abandoned of hope, looking on his last sun, a crowd of enemies dance round him with frantic gestures and brandished knives ; and as they go round and round in the horrid dance, though avoiding to wound, they strike at his throat and face ; but the red man stands motionless, erect ; nor shrinks, nor winks, nor gives sign of terror. Ingeniously cruel, they

search out the most delicate seats of feeling, and thrust the burning match up to the quick. Inch by inch they cut his living form to pieces ; but, with blood, they wring out no groan from that defiant man. Naming their braves he has slain and scalped in battle, this hero of the forest sings his bold death-song, scorning their powers of torture. How different from the central object in this savage scene the form of Christian patience, her head meekly bowing to the hand of God ; heaven in her eye ; resignation in her face ; and on her pale lips the seal of silence ! It is pride, not patience, that sustains yonder haughty savage—stubborn endurance, the power of an iron will. And in some who, uncomplaining, suffer pain, or loss, or wrong, or calumny, their silence, though they get credit for patience, may be but pride. It is a well-known fact, that a man who stands erect can carry a heavier burden on his head than he ever can on his back ; and, raising itself to the occasion, pride has stood erect under crushing burdens, confronted misfortune, and, while smarting under insult and injuries, has scorned to gratify its enemies by betraying a sign of pain. This is but the counterfeit of patience.

Nor are we to take for this Christian grace the callousness or hardening effect which sometimes follows trials of great severity. They say that the wretch condemned to the Russian knout feels only the few first blows. After these have cut to the bone, and brought away long strips of flesh from his quivering back, the power to feel is gone. The nerves are crushed, their life destroyed ; his head droops, and the lash falls on the dying man

as if he were already dead. And some such callousness has come over hearts that have suffered many and severe afflictions ; future trials giving them no more pain than the hot iron gives the blacksmith's horny hand. I once knew one, a Christian widow, who had early lost the husband of her youth. Other losses succeeded. The pledges of their love, a son and daughter, were snatched from her arms ; her house was left unto her desolate. But these blows did not, as many feared, break that bruised reed. A pious woman, she was patient, resigned to the will of the widow's Husband ; still it was not patience that replied to my sympathy, when, alluding to her first great trial, she said, " My first grief made so large a hole in my heart, that now it can hold no common sorrow."

Patience is not pride ; and is not insensibility. Acutely sensitive, she may feel all the pain of the rod, while kissing the hand that uses it. She bears, not because she can do no otherwise, but would no otherwise ; not because she cannot help it, but would not alter it. Leaving God to choose for her as well as chastise, to select her cross as well as her crown, she meekly says, " It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good,"—not me, but Him, good. How noble is this grace ! It makes the greatest of all sacrifices, yielding up our fondest wishes, our dearest hopes, our strongest will to the sovereignty of God. Offering the greatest of all sacrifices, it achieves the greatest of all victories ; here man makes a conquest of himself : and, in the judgment of Solomon, " he that ruleth his own spirit is greater than he that taketh a city."

Let a good man, then, count it all joy when he falls into divers trials, for—God's Spirit brooding in the stormy waters—patience is born of trials. If not their child, she is their nursling ; it is their storms that rock her cradle. I say not that we are to pray for trials, though, all unexpected, they may come in answer to our prayers. We seek that patience may have her perfect work, and God sends trials in answer. It is rough work that polishes. Look at the pebbles on the shore ! Far inland, where some arm of the sea thrusts itself deep into the bosom of the land, and expanding into a salt loch, lies girdled by the mountains, sheltered from the storms that agitate the deep, the pebbles on the beach are rough, not beautiful ; angular, not rounded. It is where long white lines of breakers roar, and the rattling shingle is rolled about on the strand, that its pebbles are rounded and polished. As in nature, as in the arts, so in grace ; it is rough treatment that gives souls as well as stones their lustre ; the more the diamond is cut the brighter it sparkles ; and in what seems hard dealing, their God has no end in view but to perfect His people's graces. Our Father, and kindest of fathers, He afflicts not willingly ; He sends tribulations, but hear St. Paul tell their purpose,—“ Tribulation worketh patience, patience experience, experience hope.” Therefore, as he said, we glory in tribulation, therefore we should count it all joy when we fall into divers trials. Let patience have her perfect work ; wait patiently for God to explain His own providences ; wait patiently for the hour of deliverance.—Woman, He says, my time is not yet come ; wait patiently

for the hour of death, for the heavenly rest, for the blood-bought crown. A little more patience, and you shall need patience no more. One of the multitude whom no man can number, who stand before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands,—the days of your mourning are ended.

Refuge in Trial.

"If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed."—ST. JAMES i. 5, 6.

IT was a common thing for men in old times to provide themselves with a refuge against the hour when the worst came to the worst. You may see it in the crumbling ruins of our old castles, where, once carefully concealed behind the arras, it now stands exposed in the narrow stair within the thick and massive walls. By this, when the gates were forced, and the defenders, a bleeding band, were driven back from room to room, they, suddenly pushing aside a panel, descended into the dungeons; and issuing out by some secret port, escaped with their lives. And to this day the shepherds show the hiding-places among their green hills, the "holes and caves of the earth" to which our forefathers betook themselves when persecution waxed hot, and bloodhounds bayed at their heels. A midnight march brought the ruthless soldiery in the gray of the morning to the cottage of a lone upland, where some man of God was in hiding. They surrounded the house—but missed their prey. Warned by trusty watchers, who often concealed bold daring and deep cunning under the garb of

homely simplicity, he was off. Near by rose a dizzy crag, roared a foaming waterfall ; and ere his enemies arrived, the fugitive had leaped the chasm, and scaled the rock, and swinging himself up by the arms of a friendly mountain-ash, whose scarlet foliage screened the mouth of a dark cavern, he was safe within, singing to the music of the cataract these appropriate words : “ In the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion, in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me, he shall set me up upon a rock ; and now shall mine head be lifted up above mine enemies round about me.”

The “Chronicles of Froissart” relate the strange issue of a siege which took place in the days of chivalry—and somewhere, I think, in France. Though gallantly defended, the out-works of the citadel had been carried ; the breach was practicable ; to-morrow was fixed for the assault. That none, alarmed at the desperate state of their fortunes, might escape under the cloud of night, the besiegers guarded every sally-port, and indeed the whole sweep of wall. They had the garrison in a net ; and only waited for the morrow to secure, or to slaughter them. The night wore heavily on ; no sortie was attempted ; no sound came from the beleaguered citadel ; its brave, but ill-starred defenders seemed to wait their doom in silence. The morning came ; with its dawn the stormers rushed at the breach ; sword in hand they poured in to find—the nest empty, cold. The bird was flown ; the prey escaped. But how ? That was a mystery ; it seemed a miracle, till an opening was discovered that led by a flight of steps down into the bowels of the rock. They descended, and explored their

way with cautious steps and lighted torches, until this subterranean passage led them out a long way off from the citadel, among quiet, green fields, and the light of day. It was plain that by this passage, the doors of which stood open, their prey had escaped under cover of the night. A clever device—a wise precaution. It was the refuge of the besieged, provided against such a crisis. And when affairs seem desperate, and the worst has come to the worst, how should it encourage God's people to remember that He has promised them as safe a retreat ! What says an apostle ? "God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able to bear ; but will with the temptation also make a way of escape." Our extremity is His opportunity.

These words of Scripture, and a whole cloud of corresponding passages—"a cloud of witnesses," indicate that God's people always have a refuge in their days of trial. According to David, "God is known in her palaces for a refuge ;" and in what glowing language is that truth sung out by Moses in his parting words to the tribes of Israel : "There is none like unto the God of Jeshurun, who rideth upon the heaven in thy help. The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms. Happy art thou, O Israel ! who is like unto thee, O people saved by the Lord, the shield of thy help, and who is the sword of thy excellency !"

Now let us turn our attention to one of the many refuges and sources of support which a pious man has amid the trials of life. "Is any among you afflicted ? let him pray." So says the apostle

St. James ; and referring to the trials of the first Christians, he says : "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not ; and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed." I would ask attention to the following points :

What we are to ask.

Wisdom ! As used in Scripture, that word has a wide meaning ; and here, as elsewhere, it may stand for all the graces and virtues that constitute true religion. And what of these we lack, whatever indeed we lack—not this or that man lacks, but any man, every man lacks, God promises a liberal supply of it. There is no restriction, no exclusion here. He would have all men to pray. It is their own blame if people are not saved. As a mother would do to her fallen and guilty child, God opens his arms wide to the world ; and would press it to His bosom. With the offer of Christ to all, and virtue in His blood to cleanse all, who is lost is his own murderer. Who goes to hell is not excluded, but excludes himself from heaven. As the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, whom He sent to seek and save the lost, God, if they will but ask it, giveth liberally to *all* men.

But though I do not understand the word *wisdom*, as employed by St. James in the passage quoted, in a strictly literal sense, there is much need of wisdom, of a sound, right, practical judgment, in times of trial. That will save us much suffering, if not much sin.

It is not wise to fret under our trials ; the high-

mettled horse that is restive in the yoke but galls his shoulder—the poor bird that dashes herself against the bars of the cage but ruffles her feathers and aggravates the sufferings of captivity. It is not wise, overlooking the sovereign will of God, and that presiding Providence which numbers the hairs of our head as well as the stars of heaven, and without which neither a sparrow nor an angel can fall, to trace our calamities only to ourselves—that breeds but unavailing regrets; or to others—that only kindles bad and angry passions. It is not wise to look on our trials as heavier than those of others, and as warranting us to cry, in the language of Jerusalem, “Behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow, which is done unto me, where-with the Lord hath afflicted me!”—that can only foster a rebellious spirit. It is not wise to forget that our blessings are loans from God; and that when we lose them, whether husband, wife, or child, health or wealth, fame or fortune, their owner but resumes His own, otherwise we shall be ready to regard God as a robber, rather than to render Him the gratitude due to a most bountiful benefactor. It is not wise to cling too closely to the living,—else we shall some day be found embracing the dead. We are to inquire whether God has any controversy with us, whether He is not rebuking idolatry by destroying our idols, still it is not wise to regard our trials as being certainly expressions of His wrath: it were a great mistake to fancy that the goldsmith is dissatisfied with the gold he burns or the lapidary with the diamond he grinds, or the gardener with

the tree he prunes. On the contrary, the metal is cast into the furnace, and the gem is ground on the wheel, and the tree bleeds beneath the knife, not because they are little, but because they are much esteemed. It is not wise to meet trials in our own strength ; on the contrary, when they advance with threatening front let us run to God, and lay hold on Him ; as, at the cry " Hold on," sailors seize rope, mast, shrouds, or bulwark, when the curling wave rises at their bows, and, bursting, sweeps the deck ; and but for their hold would sweep them overboard, into a watery grave. I need not say that it is not wise—it is madness, it is misery in this world, and damnation in the next, to fly from grief to the intoxicating bowl. I don't say that it is unnatural. Tell the drowning man it is but a floating straw, a poor rotten twig he seizes, yet he clutches at it, grasps it ; and when all God's billows are going over men's heads, those who have not comfort in God will seek it elsewhere, anywhere. Men have fled to the wine-cup to drown reflection ; and I have heard a poor, wretched mother, the slave of drinking, trace her habits to domestic trials, to the desolation death had made in her home and heart. Miserable refuge ! Job's friends, indeed, are these stimulants—beer, wine, spirits : " Miserable comforters are ye all !" Yet, as the wise man says, " They drink to forget their poverty, and remember their misery no more." By all means fly from sorrow to the bosom of God : but to fly from sorrow into the arms of sin is an awful illustration of the common adage, " An unsanctified affliction is the worst of all afflictions"—and also of the pro-

phet's question : "Why should ye be stricken any more ? ye will revolt more and more."

There is great need of wisdom under trials ; to be enlightened as well as supported by the grace of God, and in the Holy Ghost to have a Counsellor as well as Comforter. With all thy getting get wisdom—wisdom to trace your trials to the Hand above ; to bear them so that you may glorify God in the fires ; to improve them, so that you may get the good intended, and be more than indemnified for their heaviest sufferings. The honey of the bee is an excellent antidote to its sting ; and what comfort under trials like feeling that we are the better of them ? Has not many a dark cloud, that in the distance lightened and thundered, and filled us with alarm, broke in blessings on our head—leaving us, as, passing away, it showed the bright bow of the covenant on its back, to say, "It is good for me that I was afflicted : before I was afflicted I went astray, but now have I kept thy word." "Right are thy judgments, O Lord ; in faithfulness thou hast afflicted me !" "Our light afflictions, which are but for a moment, shall work out for us a far more exceeding, even an eternal weight of glory."

Next, *Of whom we are to ask wisdom.*

Of God who giveth liberally and upbraideth not ! If we want money, we go to the bank ; water, we go to the well ; medicine, we go to the physician ; and who wants divine blessings, mercy to pardon, or grace to help, is to go to God—"He giveth liberally."

Did you ever stand in a bright summer day by the black swirling pool at the foot of a waterfall

and look up to the top of the cascade, where, scattering its liquid beads, like sparkling diamonds, it sprang boldly out from the rock into the air? How ceaseless the flow! and with its snowy foam ever flashing in the light of day, and its deep, solemn voice, in that lone glen, ever praising God through the hours of night—what an image does it offer of the stream of mercies that are continually falling on us from the bountiful hand of God!

The Scriptures employ other, and indeed many images of God's affluent bounty. God himself says, "I will be as the dew unto Israel"—but there are cloudy skies and breezy nights when no dew falls, emblem of divine bounty, to hang gems on every bush, and sow the fields with "orient pearls." Again it is said: "He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass, as showers that water the earth"—but there are days and weeks without a drop of rain. Again it is said, "I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground"—but it is only on rare occasions that the river, swollen by many a tributary, comes down red and roaring, and, overflowing all its banks, turns every wooded knoll into an island, and green valleys into inland seas. But, is there ever a month, a week, a day, an hour, a moment, a single moment, when from thy blessed and bountiful hand, O God! mercies are not falling in showers—thick as the rain-drops that shimmer in sunlight on the water, or as the snow-flakes that fill the wintry air.

He giveth liberally, and he giveth constantly; and, if He pours such affluence of blessings on all men, even on His enemies, even on those that

trample the mercies, as they trample the snows of heaven under their foul, guilty feet, what may not His own, His chosen people expect? Will He deny His fathership when they, His children, His own loving children, repair to Him with wounds to stanch, with cheeks to dry, with bruised or broken hearts to bind, with cries like these—Father, help me, I am weak! Lift me up, I have fallen! Forgive me, I have sinned! Save, oh, save me, I perish! How have I seen a poor wandering vagrant, when her child, footsore and weary, had sunk, crying, on the road, true to a mother's love, take up the creature in her arms, and, shifting its burden to her own back, trudge on her weary way? And what may not you, groaning under your burdens, hope for from Him, who is as much greater than we in love, as in the wisdom that planned, and the power that built this glorious universe? You know what are your thoughts and ways to a darling child that is withering away like a delicate flower, over whose couch you hang in anxious solicitude, for whom you have prayed in agony, and whose young life you would purchase at the price of all your fortune! Hear, then, what God says: "My ways and my thoughts to you, are as far above your ways and thoughts to it, as the heavens are above the earth." I have known a mother who trod the great city's streets, with weary steps and broken heart, the long night through, searching every house and den of infamy to find her lost one. She found her. Clasping the unholy thing to her virtuous bosom, locking her in close embraces, to win the wanderer back, how did she promise her every pleasure of home,

with these hands to toil and work for her, never to cast up her sins, nor speak an upbraiding word? and these yearnings of a mother's heart, what were they, but, if I might say so, a spark struck from divinity—a drop out of the ocean of love that fills the bosom of an infinite God.

"He upbraideth not." You are unworthy; you have abused my kindness; charity is wasted on you; I am tired of helping you; patience is exhausted; you come too often; you ask too much—such language never fell from the lips of God. I have often seen a shivering, ragged child, or a widow, in brown and rusty weeds, with an emaciated infant in her bosom, timidly knocking at a rich man's door, to have it, as soon as it was opened and they were seen, shut rudely in their face. And while I thought how ill it would be for them were God, in their hour of need—on a bed of death, or at a bar of judgment—to deal with them as they deal with others, it was blessed to think that the door of mercy is shut in no man's face; that God's heart is shut against no man's misery; that God's hand is shut against no man's need; that God's eye is shut to no man's danger; that God's ear is shut to no man's prayer. "He giveth liberally, and upbraideth not." Appearing in human form, and speaking through the voice of His beloved Son, He stands up there at the wide-open door of heaven, crying, "Come unto Me, all ye that labor, and are heavy laden;" be your burden sins or sorrows, be your load grief or guilt, Come unto me, and I will give you rest; Cast thy burden on the Lord and He will sustain it; Open thy mouth wide and He will fill it.

Again, *How we are to ask.*

With faith, nothing wavering !

The pendulum of a time-piece is in constant motion, yet it makes no progress, because it has no sooner swung a certain way to one side, than it swings as far to the other. In like manner, as you may know by watching the floating weed, or the foam-bells that whiten it, or the boat that rides on its back—the mass of water that forms a wave makes no progress. Impelled by the wind, the wave advances, but not the water of which it is formed. If the water did, it would bear yonder drowning wretch to the shore ; nor merely leave the wave, passing under, to raise his head to catch a sight of the blessed land, and then, rolling away to break on the beach, leave him to perish. And so, alas ! will it be with many, who are not altogether insensible to religious impressions, who may even be easily affected by such influences as a sermon, the solemnities of a death-bed, the heaving swell of a revival ; and being so, imagine themselves on the way to heaven, just as many careless observers imagine because the wave goes shoreward, the water also does.

As employed by St. James to describe certain characters, the wave is a most felicitous figure. Look at a boat floating on the sea, at high or low water, when the tide, out or in, and on the turn, has ceased to run ; or watch a boat away amid the swell of a mountain lake when the wind, retiring to its caves among the hills, has roared itself to rest ! It is in constant motion between earth and heaven—now mounting to the top of the billow, and now sinking out of sight in the trough of the

sea ; yet with all this violent action, heaving, tossing, rolling, the skiff does not make an inch of way, but continues to ride over the self-same spot. Too true a figure of many professing Christians ! Vacillating—not hypocrites, but through the influence of opposing motives—double-minded, and therefore unstable, heaven now seems to draw them upward, and then again earth draws them down—now, following Christ, they cry, with the young ruler, “Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life ?” and then, with their backs turned on Him, they are leaving Him ; sorrowful, perhaps, but still leaving Him—now they are casting sin away from them, and by and by they are locked in her foul embraces—now they are fighting the Philistines, and ere long you find them sound asleep in Delilah’s lap—now full of alarm, in fear of hell, pricked to the heart, their conscience awake, bent on being saved, they make a rush for heaven, and their foot is on the door-step—“they are not far from the kingdom of heaven ;” but a cross lies on the threshold, and stumbling on that they fall—fall back into sin ; and the last state of that man is perhaps worse than the first. One day they seem to serve Christ, and certainly serve their lusts the next. They don’t want to lose heaven, yet they cannot part with earth. Often starting up in their sleep, like one disturbed by horrid dreams, they are ever falling back again into slumber ; and thus, equally affected by opposite influences, they are like a wave of the sea, rising and falling, now moving heavenward, now earthward—driven with the wind and tossed. Well, of a life spent in such unsteady efforts after what is good—in sinning to-

day, and repenting to-morrow—what is to be the issue? It comes to nothing; like a door moving on its hinges, they make no progress; and the fate of their hopes, when death throws them on another world, is foreshadowed by the wave, that, launched on an iron-bound shore, bursts into froth and foam. The end of these things is death.

Who, dying, would go to glory, who would be redeemed from sin and hell, who would secure a saving interest in Christ, who would have strength to endure trial, and stand its buffetings, as a rock stands the blows of waves, must have his heart steadily, resolutely, firmly fixed on divine things. “No man having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of heaven.” Pray for unwavering faith, a strong—as Jabez Bunting, when dying, said, an *obstinate* faith in God. Seek such faith as not only lays hold of Him, but holds Him and wont let Him go; that has the grasp of a drowning man. Seek a faith greater than Joshua’s, when, laying its hand on the sun, he held it back from going on; a faith like Jacob’s, who, strange as it seems, held God from going away, as, endowed with superhuman energy, he wrestled the night through with an angel, and, the stronger of the two, prevailed—replying to the prayer, Let me go, for the day breaketh, I will not let thee go, unless thou bless me.

Were this too bold a freedom to take with God? No! We have “boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus.” It is the boldness of the little child that, unabashed by any one’s presence, climbs his father’s knee, and throws his arms around his neck—or, bursting into his room, breaks

in on his busiest hours, to have a bleeding finger bound, or some childish tears kissed away ; that says if any threaten or hurt him, I will tell my father ; and, however he might tremble to sleep alone, fears neither ghosts, nor man, nor darkness, nor devils, if he lies couched at his father's side. Such confidence, bold as it seems, springs from trust in a father's love ; and pleases rather than offends us. Well, then, if you that are evil have such hearts, and know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will our heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit, all, everything they need, to them who ask—asking with faith, nothing wavering !

Hope, as well as prayer, opens a welcome refuge to the good man in times of trial. “Blessed is he that endureth temptation, for when he is tried he shall receive the crown of life which the Lord hath promised to them that love him.” Here, how true is the common proverb : “All is well that ends well.” It is not, Blessed is he that hath no trials, whose heart they never wrung ; whose tears never flowed ; whose brightest prospects were never clouded ; whose dearest hopes never lay withered and scattered like autumn leaves, on life’s rough and rugged path ; who never entered the fiery furnace, nor trod the swelling flood. He is blessed who endureth temptation ; stands the test ; bears his burden well ; glorifies God in the fires, and comes forth shining like gold from a refiner’s furnace. Every wave of trouble lifts him but higher on the Rock of Ages—wafts him nearer to the heavenly shore.

Let the downcast lift their heads, and look up-

ward and forward ! For the joy set before Him, Jesus endured the cross and despised the shame. And He says, Learn of me ; overleap the narrow bounds of a few short years, and what shall your present sorrow be but the morning's recollection of a disagreeable dream ! The days of your mourning shall be ended—your cross exchanged for a shining crown. I have heard one say, as he bent over a friend who was groaning under the surgeon's knife, It will soon be over ! and so Jesus, with tender fellow-feeling for their infirmities, consoles His suffering people. Amid your trials, think of that—they will soon be over ; sooner, perhaps, than you fancy. Your salvation, not only nearer than when you believed, may be nearer than you suppose ; even now the cry may be sounding in heaven—Room for another saint ! a crown for another head ! and the next turn of the road may bring you in front of the gates of glory.

Whatever be your cross, don't keep, with downcast head, looking at it ; but raise your eyes to the crown that hangs yonder in heaven—beyond the grave. When grim death comes, see it glittering bright behind his awful form ; nor fear the King of Terrors. Constructed of bands of metal and bits of stone, and doomed to perish in the wreck of all things, other crowns grace the brows of dying men ; they are borne in the procession that carries a king to his grave—and, in mockery of the royal pageant, the heads that wore them are laid, low as a beggar's, in the dusty tomb. But this is a crown of life. Immortals wear it, and it is itself immortal—“a crown of glory that fadeth not away.” And how will that moment swallow up all memory of the

sorrows of earth, when, led by angels, or a father or mother, within the brilliant circle where you recognise the glorified forms of long-lost friends, you stand before the throne ; and, bending low your head, receive, amid the plaudits of the sky, this crown at the hand of Jesus.

And what shall heaven see there and then ? Life crowning love ! not Merit, that stands proud and panting at the goal ; not Success, that has filled the world with famous deeds ; not Learning, that has explored all the mysteries of knowledge, human and divine ; not Prophecy, with her many tongues ; not even Faith, grasping the cross ; nor clear-eyed Hope, with her hand on the anchor, and her gaze on heaven ; but Love, the true queen of graces. She who, when Faith seemed to lose hold of Christ, and Hope to lose sight of heaven, still clung to Jesus ; and, refusing to part with Him, said, Entreat me not to leave thee, nor to return from following after thee ; where thou goest I will go, and where thou lodgest I will lodge. Thanks be to God who giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ, says St Paul ; and I say, thanks be to God, who bestows the crown of life on those that love Him ; and can say, Though I have not honored thee, nor served thee, nor followed thee, nor fought for thee, nor wrought for thee, nor suffered nor sacrificed for thee, as I should have done, yet, "Lord, thou that knowest all things, knowest that I love thee."

In Temptation.

"Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: but every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death."—ST. JAMES i. 13-15.

ONE of the highest flights of Milton's poetry is his story of the encounter between Satan and the porters of the gate of hell :

*"Before the gates there sat
On either side a formidable shape ;
The one seem'd woman to the waist, and fair ;
But ended foul in many a scaly fold,
Voluminous and vast ; a serpent arm'd
With mortal sting ;—the other shape,
If shape it might be call'd, that shape had none,
Distinguishable in member, joint, or limb ;
Or substance might be call'd that shadow seem'd,
For each seem'd either ; black it stood as night,
Fierce as ten Furies, terrible as hell,
And shook a dreadful dart ; what seem'd his head,
The likeness of a kingly crown had on."*

The monster, thus graphically described, advances with horrid strides to bar Satan's passage. Incensed at its presumption, and fearing no created thing, he prepares, with arms, to force his way. Like two dark clouds charged with thunders, they approach each other—Satan resolved to be out, this grizzly terror resolved to keep him in :

" And now great deeds
 Had been achieved, whereof all hell had rung,
 Had not the snaky sorceress, that sat
 Fast by hell-gate, and kept the fatal key,
 Risen, and, with hideous outcry rush'd between.
 'O father, what intends thy hand,' she cried,
 Against thy only son? What fury, O son,
 Possesses thee to bend that mortal dart
 Against thy father's head?" "

Having thrown herself between the combatants, and stayed their fury, in a tale which the poet's fancy has woven out of a passage in the Epistle of St. James, this creature, half fair woman, half scaly serpent, proceeds to explain herself. Addressing her words to Satan, she tells him how her name is Sin—and how, at the time of the great revolt in heaven, she sprung, a goddess armed, from his pain-split head—and how, pregnant by him, when cast out of the celestial spheres, and sent to keep watch at the gates of hell, amid parturient pangs she gave birth to a son, who

" Forth issued, brandishing his fatal dart,
 Made to destroy. I fled, and cried out, Death!
 Hell trembled at the hideous name, and sigh'd
 From all her caves, and back resounded, Death!" "

In this grand fashion John Milton illustrates these weighty sayings, "Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: but every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death."

Now, leaving the poet to soar away, singing on wings sublime, let us descend, and take a practical view of the temptations with which every good man has to contend.

Reflect on the importance of this subject.

An example of "much in little," the Ten Commandments embrace the whole duty of man. An example also of "much in little," the Lord's Prayer, in a few heads, sums up all that we should pray for. It contains but seven petitions; and how large the subject of temptation bulked in our Lord's eye, and how important therefore it should seem in ours, is to be gathered from the circumstance, that it forms the subject of one of these seven. You may guess the rank and consequence of a man by the society that he moves in, and here the subject of temptation appears in the highest company. It is classed with subjects that engage the intellects of angels, that concern God's glory, and that are identified both with our present, and with our eternal welfare. If it occupied the same proportion of man's life, a seventh part of all our thoughts, our cares, and our time, would be given to it—to resisting temptation; avoiding it; fighting it; guarding against the sins it may lead to, as well as mourning and seeking the forgiveness of those it has led to.

If the temptations that beset and assail us do not occupy such a place in our thoughts and lives—for they give some men no trouble—that admits of an obvious but melancholy explanation. It is not, that the man who is without regrets, anxieties, daily and hourly struggles, is a better

man than he who has "fightings without and fears within." It is not that he is holy; never tempted; or that he never yields to temptation. On the contrary, it is because he, unresisting, yields to it. What more pleasant and easy than the motion of a vessel that, gliding down the stream, is borne onwards to the cataract that shall hurl it to destruction? But bring the boat's head round, and a struggle begins; peace is gone now; she trembles from stem to stern; and by her violent plunges, the waves that break over her bows, and, shaking every timber, threaten to engulf her, you know the power and presence of a current that had been quietly wafting her on to ruin.

Thus it is with man and temptation, so soon as he is converted. No sooner is peace with God, through Christ, settled, than war is proclaimed; and the man involved in its arduous and life-long struggles. I have seen one that had grown gray in the army, and yet had never been under fire; or seen the serried bayonets glance, but on parade. The Captain of our salvation has no such soldiers; His have given and suffered many wounds; and have all a sore fight of it. This conflict begins with conversion, and if I might borrow an illustration from heathen fables, the infant Hercules has to strangle serpents in his cradle. So soon as a man is new-born, and turns his face heavenward, he has hell to confront and fight with. And, besides the devil and his angels, besides the world and its seductive influences, in passions that he has lodged in his breast, and fed by long indulgence into strength, it may

be said that "his enemies are the men of his own house." And such in number and in power are the temptations with which a good man has to contend, that no Christian will think the language of David extravagant: "They compassed me about; they compassed me about like bees. My soul is among lions; and I lie even among them that are set on fire." Nay, there are times, and terrible temptations, when, in the language of a psalm, part, and some suppose all, of which our Lord repeated on His cross, he may be ready to cry, "Many bulls have compassed me: strong bulls of Bashan have beset me round. They gaped upon me with their mouths, as a ravening and a roaring lion. I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint, my heart is like wax. My strength is dried up like a pot-sherd: thou hast brought me into the dust of death; for dogs have compassed me. O Lord, my strength, haste thee to help me. Deliver my soul from the sword; my darling from the power of the dog. Save me from the lion's mouth; hear me from the horns of the unicorns."

If these figures are appropriate, how formidable are our temptations! It might seem impossible that victory could crown our arms in a war waged against enemies that swarm thick as bees; that are strong as bulls, and fierce as ravening lions. Yet, hear what God says: "Thou shalt tread on the lion and adder, the young lion and the dragon shalt thou trample under foot;" and hear Paul, as, calmly descending into the vale of death, he goes, singing, like a brave old warrior—"I have fought the good fight, I have

finished my course, I have kept the faith. Hereafter there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day." Nor is that all—proclaiming equal triumphs through the same grace to others, he adds, "and not to me only, but to all who love his appearing." Let the good man be assured that his victory over temptation is certain, if he goes about it aright. It turns much on prayer. Thrown into the scale, that decides the battle; drawing on divine strength, that makes little Davids more than a match for giant sins. What devil is there but may be cast out by prayer and fasting?

Yet, prayer is not enough. Like our fathers when they conquered the English at Bannockburn, or the English when they conquered the French at Cressy, we are to rise from our knees; to stand up and fight; to quit us like men; "having done all," to stand. We are to put on the whole armor of God; and, since we know neither when nor where the adversary may assault us, we are never to put it off. Live and die in harness—using such precautions, as some say Cromwell did against the assassin's dagger—his dress concealed a shirt of mail: and in the council-chamber, at the banquet, in courts as in camps, he wore that always. To his workshop, the counting-room, the social circle, the market, the place of business, the scenes of his most innocent enjoyments, let a good man go, as the peasant of the East goes to his plough. With larks singing in blue skies above his head, and daisies, bathed in dew springing at his feet, and feathered flocks from sounding shore and noisy woods wheeling

round, and feeding in the furrows behind him, our ploughman, void of care, and fearless of danger, whistles at his work ; but yonder, where fiery Bedouins scour the land, and bullets whistling from the bush may suddenly call the peasant to drop the ox-goad and fly to arms, the sun glances on other iron than the plough-share—a sword hangs at his thigh, and a gun is slung at his back.

To pray, to fight, are important ; but not less important if we would have no man take our crown, and, resisting, overcome temptation, is a right understanding of its springs and sources. The physician is most likely to cure disease who has discovered its seat and nature ; while the patient dies in the hands of him who prescribes for the head, when it is the heart that is diseased. To save a ship from sinking, we must find the leak. Temptations, like noxious weeds, are best killed by putting the knife to their root ; nor will the stream of our thoughts, and wishes, and desires ever be sanctified till the salt, as at Jericho, is cast in at the spring. Let us see, therefore, where the springs and sources of sin lie.

The source of temptation is not in God.

The apostle St. James is clear on this point. He says, "Let no man say, when he is tempted, I am tempted of God ; for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man."

In the mountains of the Black Forest an extraordinary appearance is occasionally seen. With the sun just rising at your back, you look across the valley on the curtain of mist that, hung from the skies, falls in rolling folds on the opposite hill ; and there, wearing a faint halo round his head,

stands the giant spectre of the mountains—a colossal form of vast proportions, looking as if, at one bound, he could leap from hill to hill, and tearing up oaks and rocks, hurl them at the head of his enemies. The terror of superstitious peasants, the origin of many a wild—unearthly legend, this is a mere vision—a shadow without substance. It has no reality. Observed to bend or stand erect, to move a limb or arm after him, to repeat every motion of the spectator, it is nothing more than his own form, immensely magnified ; and projected on the cloud, like the pictures of a magic lantern on its screen. Such pictures on the mind's fancy were the pagan deities ; the object of the heathen's worship, whether Baal, or Jupiter, or Venus, or Mars, or Bacchus, being but a projection of the man himself on the field of fancy, with the faculties and passions of humanity all immensely magnified. A strange mixture, like himself, of vices and of virtues, they illustrate the words of God, Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thou art ; and thus formed, these gods were tempted with evil, and with evil tempted men.

Importing this idea of heathenism, or perhaps misunderstanding the Scriptures, where God, according to an Eastern idiom, is said to do what in fact He but permits to be done—as when it is said that He “hardened Pharaoh’s heart,” it appears that in the days of the apostle St. James, some accused God of sin ; alleging, in excuse of their sins, that they were tempted of Him. We shrink with horror from such an idea. “Their rock is not as our Rock.” Time casts its stains on the purest snow, and the sun shines not undimmed

by spots ; but we bow in the dust before God, as a being of ineffable purity and infinite holiness. More shocked than if we heard some foul crime imputed to parents we venerate and love, we recoil from the thought that He before whom angels stand veiled and in whose eyes even the heavens are not clean, could either be Himself tempted to commit sin, or could tempt any to commit it.

Yet what many would not directly, they indirectly lay at God's door—in the attempt to excuse themselves, accusing Him. Look, for example, at Adam's answer to the question, Hast thou eaten of the tree ? Summoned from his hiding-place, standing beside the blushing partner of his guilt, overwhelmed by strange terrors, trembling in every limb, the prey of anguish and remorse, had his tongue, cleaving to the roof of his mouth, refused to do its office, we should not have been astonished. But he replies ; and his answer betrays cunning rather than confusion. How mean and dastardly, how base and selfish and hateful, has sin made this once noble creature ! How are the mighty fallen ! See him trying to turn over on his poor wife the whole vengeance of an angry God ! He attempts to save himself, and leave her to bear the brunt of it ; hers is the guilt ; she is the temptress. Hear him : " The woman, she gave me and I did eat." Nor is that all ; nor " the front of his offending." More, and worse still, he divides the blame between her and God. It is not simply, " the woman gave me and I did eat," but " the woman *that thou gavest me*, she gave me, and I did eat ;" a serpent in my bosom,

I got her from thee ; the circumstances in which thou didst place me, more than my own fault, are answerable for my sin. "The woman that *thou* gavest me !" What was this but a covert way of accusing God ; a bold insinuation that God, not he, was to blame for the Fall ; an excuse, that, like all our apologies for sin, adds insult to injury ; and but aggravates the offence ?

I do not fancy any are so bold and bad as of deliberate intent to lay the guilt of their crimes on God. Yet what else, in fact, do they, who make a scapegoat of their circumstances—attributing their sins to constitutional temperament, or to the headlong power of their passions, or to the difficulties of their position, or to the suddenness or the strength of their trials ? These apologies, whether offered to men, or used to allay guilty fears, and quiet an uneasy conscience, throw the blame of sin on Providence ; and to throw the blame of it on Providence, is to throw it upon God. Excuses such as these but add to our guilt. They may now satisfy, or rather stupefy our conscience, but they shall stand us in no stead at the bar of Him who neither tempts nor is tempted. He has left us without excuse. Assured that God will not suffer any, that seek Him, to be tempted above that they are able to bear, but will with the temptation also make a way of escape, we are without excuse ; but not without a remedy. Blessed be God ! the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin.

The source of temptation *is in ourselves.*

"Every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed."

If you apply a magnet to the end of a needle that courses freely on its pivot, the needle, affected by a strange attraction, approaches as if it loved it. Reverse the order, apply the magnet now to the opposite end—to the other pole, and the needle shrinks away, trembling, as if it did not love, but hated it. So it is with temptation. One man rushes into the arms of vice ; another recoils from them with horror. Joseph starts back, saying, How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God ? What is loved by one, is loathsome in another's eyes ; and according as the nature it addresses is holy or unholy, temptation attracts or repels ; gives pain or pleasure ; is loved or hated. It is our corrupt and evil passions that give its power to temptation. These are the combustibles it fires ; the quick and fiery powder, that a spark which a dewdrop had quenched, flashes into an explosion.

In their visits to our world, the angels were exposed to temptation ; but what harm did they suffer ? None. Amidst wide-spread contagion, they never were infected ; nor, as people import the plague from other countries, did they take sin away with them on their return to heaven, and spread the deadly pestilence in that sinless land. Can a man take fire in his bosom, and his clothes not be burned ? True ; yet angels suffered nothing from coming in contact with sinners ; but passed among them as unstained as the sunbeam of their heavens through the murky air of our smoky cities. Like a flower that, brought from breezy hill or open moor, pines away amid the pent-up and poisoned atmosphere of our towns,

Lot's graces were blighted by his residence in Sodom ; it corrupted him, but not his heavenly visitors. True, it may be said that, since our unhappy fall, the stay of angels in our world has been brief, and that sin had no time to affect their constitution—that the leaven had no time to work. But time is of no account in their case ; nor would it be in ours if the Fall had not furnished occasion to cry, How is the gold become dim ; how is the most fine gold changed ? Pure gold may remain in the fire a thousand years without loss of substance ; without contracting a single stain, or losing an atom of its weight. The fire that turns the oak into ashes, marble into dust, iron into rust, has no power to destroy, or even injure, a metal that shines but the brighter for the glowing flames. Gold is therefore called, in the language of metallurgy, a *perfect* metal ; and were we perfect—perfect in holiness—the only effect of life's fiery trials would be, not to burn up, but to brighten the features of God's image. Thus I believe no angel ever descended on our world, but he returned to his native heavens to abhor sin more ; to hate it with a more perfect hatred ; and with deeper, holier feelings to sing, as he resumed his place in the shining ranks, and joined his fellows in their song—Holy, holy, holy, art thou, Lord God Almighty, who was, and is, and art to come !

Look at our Lord's case ! How clearly it shows that temptation, however much to be dreaded by us, is harmless, unless where it finds corruption—that the seed dies, unless it falls on a congenial soil ! He lived among temptations for more than thirty successive years. For more than thirty

years His holy manhood was in the fire ; and He came out of it without stain or sin. The Lamb of God, without spot or blemish, holy, harmless, undefiled, He was among, and yet separate from, sinners. A remarkable phenomenon this ! one sinless among the sinful ; pure amid pollution ; a faultless man, in whose chaste and placid bosom temptation never kindled a wish, a thought, a fancy that might not be exposed to the eyes both of God and man. He himself explains the wonder—“ The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me.”

Who, therefore, would keep out of sin, should give his chief attention to the state of his heart ; ever praying with David—Create in me, O God, a clean heart, and renew a right spirit within me ! Not that a good man will overlook the influence of external circumstances, the temptations of his position, or the character of his companions ; not that we are ever to rush into temptation—naked into the battle ; or enter it without fear and trembling till we are perfect in holiness. Stand in awe, and sin not. We cannot be too careful to keep out of the reach of sin ; not to stand in the way of sinners ; not to breathe pestilential air. Bathe not in the brightest waters where sharks are playing ! By prayer, by self-denial, by, as St. Paul did, keeping the body under, give sin no hold of you. Imitate yon ancient wrestler, who, laying aside his robes and ornaments, and all the bravery of his attire, steps naked into the arena —limbs and body shining with slippery oil ; closing with an antagonist, whose hands, slipping on the unctuous limbs, catch no firm hold, he heaves

him up to hurl him in the dust, and bear off the palm—honor won, less by his power than by his wise precaution. If prevention is better than cure, precaution is better than power ; therefore ought a good man ever to watch and pray that he enter not into temptation ; his prayer, that which our Lord has taught us, Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.

Our corrupt nature, acted on by temptation, is the source of sin.

“Lust, when it hath conceived, bringeth forth sin.”

The woman died because she ate of the tree : and she ate of the tree because she lusted after its fruit. In doing so, in the first instance, she toyed with temptation—a thing more dangerous than to play with fire-arms. With an overweening confidence in herself, she thought, perhaps, as many do, that she might venture a certain way ; and, stopping at her own pleasure, draw up—though in circumstances where poor reason is like the driver pulling at the reins, when the coach, at the heels of maddened and mastersome horses, is whirling to an upset half-way down hill. Confidence in one's self, giving presence of mind, is sometimes of advantage ; but never in those spiritual conflicts where strength is weakness ; and, as leading us to fly from danger to the arms of God, weakness is found to be strength.

The fatal mistake, which our mother committed, lay in not taking alarm at the first sign of evil, and in the first bad, wrong thought, the nascent desire for a forbidden pleasure, crushing sin in the egg—putting her foot on the spark ; like Job, who

made a covenant with his eyes, shutting hers to the tempting color of the fruit ; stopping her ears to the talk of the cunning devil ; flying, as if she had seen the serpent in its own proper shape, with crest erect, and burning eyes, and form coiled to spring—flying with terror from the scene, calling her husband Adam, calling God himself from heaven to her help.

Beware, therefore, of evil in the buddings of desire ! Whoever allow themselves to indulge in evil imaginations or thoughts, are preparing themselves to commit the crimes they fancy. Desires are the seed of deeds. Working in the dark, and all the more dangerous that their progress, like a miner's, is silent and unseen, they sap the walls of virtue ; and thus the man of God is overthrown by temptations that otherwise had broken on him, as breaks the mountain billow on a front of rock. May not the bad thoughts and fancies, that do their work secretly and unsuspected within the recesses of the heart, account for those sudden falls and sins on the part of such good men as David, that neither they, nor others, would have ever dreamt of ? The mischief is due less to the temptation than to what preceded it—and prepared for it. You are walking, for example, through a forest. Across your path, and on the ground lies, stretched out in death, a mighty tree, tall and strong—fit mast to carry a cloud of canvas, and bear unbent the strain of tempests. You put your foot lightly on it ; and how great your surprise when, breaking through the bark, it sinks deep into the body of the tree—a result much less owing to the pressure of your foot, than to the

poisonous fungi and foul, crawling insects that had attacked its core. They have left the outer rind uninjured—but hollowed out its heart. Take care your heart is not hollowed out; and nothing left you but the crust and shell of an empty profession.

Keep thy heart, therefore, with all diligence. Give it your chief and most anxious attention. Guard most sedulously, and cultivate most prayerfully that part of you where the true man lives; and which, unseen by any but God, neither incurs the blame, nor wins the applauses of men. It is in its inner chamber—remote from the public eye, that sins, and also noble deeds, are born: there, the play of life is rehearsed; and that performed in fancy which is afterwards acted before a thousand eyes; there, God or Satan sits enthroned; there, lie the deep, hidden fountains of good or evil; there, visited by angels, or haunted by demons, is a little heaven or a little hell. Be sure you keep it for God. Be thy body His temple, and thy heart the secret shrine, where the light of the Shechinah burns, and the holy law is preserved, and good angels spread their wings over the blood-besprinkled seat of mercy, and the spirit of man, all alone, like the solitary High Priest within the veil, holds closest intercourse with God. Holiest of temples! see that nothing enter or find lodgment there that can hurt or defile.

The fruit of sin is death.

What man is he that desireth life, and loveth many days? The Psalmist answers his own question, and in the ordinary course of Providence what rule so good as his to attain longevity, and fall at mellow autumn like a shock of corn in

its season? There is more truth in his answer, though it be summed up in a single sentence, than in whole volumes on medicine and the art of preserving, or restoring health. What man, desiring life, and loving many days, would, where rosy infants play with hoary locks, see his children, and his children's children? Let him, says David, depart from evil and do good. In the ruddy cheek, and robust form, and elastic step, and bounding health, and iron frame, and the long, light-hearted, laughing, singing, happy years—the green old age which the early and continued practice of Christian virtues so often insures—we have still some links, some lingering vestiges of the old marriage tie between a sinless and an endless life.

Death has passed on all men, because all have sinned. And looking only at temporal death, see how vice hurries multitudes into the grave—shortening their days, and rudely shaking out the sands of life. Some four or five years, on an average, darkly closes the life of such as seduced become seducers; and prowl our streets, like night wolves, ravening for their prey. So perishes many a sweet flower that a villain's hand did pluck; and, when it had lost its blooming attractions, flung on the street to be trodden under foot as the veriest, vilest weed. Is not the cup where the wine conceals a serpent, and the vile dregs are shame, and sorrow and disease, offered to the drunkard's lips by a grisly hand? Immorality wrecks more fortunes than adversity; and bad habits make more bankrupts than bad trade. Vice supplies the greedy grave with more victims than war—more of our countrymen, directly or indirectly, year by year,

perish by the bottle than fell in Britain's greatest and bloodiest battle ; more cruel than old Time, she plucks the scythe from his hands, and, with rapid step and long sweep, mowing down the fairest flowers of the grass, she cuts short the life of thousands he had spared for years. Time "slays his thousands," but Vice her "tens of thousands." Many do not live out half their days. Even when their sun does not go down at noon, and life's lamp, not blown, is left to burn out, how true of many are the words of the Naamathite—"His bones are full of the sin of his youth, which shall be down with him in the dust." While godliness is profitable for all things, having the promise of the life that now is, as well as of that which is to come, in the horrid diseases, and in the many grim shapes of death which follow the steps of vice, and form the train both of Bacchus and of the Paphian queen, God brands sin with the stamp of His high displeasure.

But here death does not carry our thoughts only to the grave, but beyond the grave—into eternity—down into the pit. It is a sad and awful thing to see one struggling in the arms of death ; to watch the light of life sinking in its socket, till, sometimes with a dying flash, it expires ; to gaze on the pale, silent, solemn, lifeless corpse ; to hear the mould, from sexton's shovel, rattle hollow on the coffin ; and when his spade has smoothed the grassy turf, and uncovered mourners have paid farewell honors to the dead, to leave a loved one to moulder away into the dust of death. Yet faith in Jesus can stand these trials. Soaring to the heavens where the spirit has fled, anticipating the hour when graves shall heave, and rending

tombs shall open for mortal to spring into immortality, faith can go through the last parting as friends, standing on the shore, wave hands and handkerchiefs to the emigrants they are to follow in the next ship; and rejoin ere long in a better land. But where there is no true faith in Christ, and peace has never been made with God through the blood of His cross, sins are finished in a more dreadful death—the second death—eternal death—in those doleful regions where the dying never die. “Rest for the weary;” “There is no sorrow there;” these revival hymns are sung of another land. Here is no rest for the weary; the eye never closes; no sleep brings sweet forgetfulness; no hope ever whispers, It will soon be over; but despair, with stony horror in her face, shakes her snaky locks, and, gnashing her teeth, mutters, It will never be over—never!

Looking at death under this aspect, on the brink of the “horrible pit,” I almost cease to wonder that God gave up His Son to save us—there is something so dreadful in that doom. The reasonableness, as well as love of the Cross, is nowhere seen so well as by the light of these lurid gleams; and where are seen so well the unreasonableness, the folly, the mad insanity of all who put away God’s mercy, and day by day neglect this great salvation? Strong in the goodness of his cause, with his back to the throne of God, and his foot planted on the rock of truth, a man can stand against the world; who is supported by a Father’s hand, can stand erect beneath any load of sorrow; who has made his calling and election sure, can stand unmoved by the approach of death, and even

urge him to hasten his tardy steps—with the eager voice and outstretched arms of a lover, crying, Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly! But who shall be able to stand, and hear this doom pronounced on his downcast head, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels? From that fate, Jesus died, and is now willing—now waits to save you. Haste to the refuge ! Flee to His arms from the wrath to come !

True Religion.

"Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world."—ST. JAMES i. 27.

THE sky which, whether studded with stars or hung in gold and purple, or one azure field over which the sun wheels his glowing course, presents always a glorious, occasionally a very extraordinary appearance. Not one but two suns are there ; and in the Arctic regions, as if to compensate the long periods when their skies are left to perpetual night, there are sometimes three—blazing away in brilliant rivalry, and shedding increase of light on sparkling icebergs and the dreary wastes of snow. Yet, though there were not three but three hundred suns, only one of them could be a true sun. The others, which are produced by a peculiar state of the atmosphere, being, though bright, yet mere images, are analogous, to borrow a familiar illustration, to the multiplied candles that shine on the silvered facets of a reflector. As with these suns, so is it with the various religious systems of the world. They are many ; numbered not by units, but hundreds. Almost every new country that voyagers have discovered has, with new trees and new flowers and new animals, presented a new form of faith

The world has no building big enough to hold all the gods that men do worship. Yet, though greater in number, and much greater in essential differences, than the races of mankind--for, differing in color and contour as the negro and the white man do, they meet in Adam, God having made of one blood all the families of the earth--among these many religions there is but one true; the rest are false--false as the mock suns of an Arctic sky. For as God is one, truth is one; and though the true may be separated from the false by a line as sharp as the edge of a razor, still they stand as irreconcilable as if they were parted by the whole distance of the poles. There are "lords many, and gods many," yet but one true God; even so there are many faiths and forms of religion, and yet but one "pure and undefiled before God."

It has been said there are many ways of going out of the world, and but one of coming into it; and it may be said there are many roads to hell, and but one to heaven. No doubt, in St. John's vision, where the final state and place of the blessed was represented as a glorious city, with streets of pure gold, and walls built of precious gems, all shining in light, that fell neither from sun nor moon, but streamed out in dazzling effulgence from the throne of God, he saw not one gate, but twelve. These gates, each a pearl, and opening on streets of gold, had a meaning. Standing open, and never shut by day or night, they betoken the security enjoyed by the blessed inhabitants; and also how open heaven has been made to every sinner who seeks it through the blood of Christ. Approach it in the right way,

and whatever may have been your character, and is your age, country, or condition, you are free to enter unchallenged—without let or hindrance. No armed sentinels, as at earthly palaces, guard the gates that invite alike the feet of prince and beggar—Whosoever believeth in the Lord Jesus Christ shall not perish, but have everlasting life. But by these twelve gates St. John never meant that there are as many different ways of getting into heaven. This portion of sacred Scripture is a figure. It is to be understood within limits ; and is no more to be pushed too far than many of our Lord's parables. There is but one way to the kingdom of God—to a state of grace in this world, and a state of glory in the next. I, says Jesus, am the way, the truth, the life ; not one of many ways, but the one way. Come unto *me*, he also says, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and *I* will give you rest ; and in perfect harmony with these declarations is that of an apostle, "There is no name given under heaven whereby man can be saved but the name of Jesus." There is but one true religion "pure and undefiled before God."

We have this religion in our Bible. There it flows unadulterated and undefiled, fresh and pure as it came from the upper spring. Let us draw it at this well—not taking our faith from man or minister, but directly from the word of God ; lest it should be like water that acquires a poisonous quality from the leaden pipes it flows through. Yet though we have the true religion here, how many mistake what religion is ; its real character ; and in what its true life consists ! They fancy themselves to be religious ; and that all is right

when all is wrong with them. There is a sense in which he that doubteth is damned ; but are not many damned just because they never doubt ? They go on, satisfied with themselves ; not doubting but that they are on the right course, when every step they take leads them further and further astray. Sincere they may be, but it is not enough to be sincere. Sincerity and zeal, as well as ease of mind, and peace of conscience, may but more surely seal their fatal, utter ruin. For it stands to reason that the faster and further a man goes, if he take the wrong direction at starting, he goes but the further wrong : the more sail she carries, the more steam she puts on, the greater the impetus with which she takes the reef, the ship is sooner and more surely wrecked. What need, therefore, since there is but one safe course to heaven, that we should often take soundings ! Why was that noble steamer which was wrecked some time ago on the coast of England lost ? not simply because she was caught in the sea mist, nor because she was often thrown out of her course by porting her helm to avoid collisions, but from false security—for want of soundings ! They had no doubt they were right, till the dreadful cry of breakers and a sudden crash too late revealed their danger. And if we would not make shipwreck of the faith, nor run the risk of never discovering our mistake till we find ourselves at the door of hell, or stand at the bar of judgment, to hear with black amazement the unexpected sentence, “ Depart from me, for I have never known you, ye workers of iniquity,” we will try our religion—put it to the test—see whether it is true religion, that which,

to use the words of St. James, is “pure and undefiled before God and the Father.”

What, then, is the character of this religion? There are two ways of describing a thing—first, showing what it is not; and second, what it is. Now, to follow, meanwhile, the first of these methods, I purpose showing that

True religion does not lie *in talking about it.*

In our Church and country the pulpit has all the speaking. In Jewish synagogues, as appears from our Lord’s history, it was not so. Any person in the assembly who had got anything good to say, might say it. It appears from the Epistles that this custom was engrafted on the Christian Church, and flourished in its early days; and some who abused this privilege, and, being talkative and conceited, were, perhaps, ever thrusting themselves on the public notice, may have been in his eye, when St. James, laying down a rule valuable at all ages, and at all times, said, Be swift to hear, and slow to speak. Though the customs of the Church have changed with time, and speaking in public is now commonly confined to the pulpit, there is still danger—and especially in these times of religious excitement—of fancying, because we can and do talk about religion, that we are religious.

There are individual as well as national peculiarities; and, in this country, the common error certainly is not to talk too much, but too little, about religion; or, at least, too little religiously. In Scotland, at least, we are taciturn; and carry our proverbial *canniness* to a fault. How little do those of us who are undoubtedly on the way to heaven resemble a body of emigrants on ship-

board—on their way across the ocean to America ! Listen to that group of men, women, and children that have seen their native hills sink below the wave, and, now leaning over the bows, are looking a-head ! Compared with theirs, how little does our conversation turn on the land in prospect ; its employments ; its enjoyments ; the friends that wait our coming ? Throwing off false shame, let us be more faithful to the souls of men, and to a world that lieth in wickedness ; and much more free in converse with each other about the Prince and the things of the heavenly kingdom—after the manner of the men of old, of whom it is said, They that feared the Lord spake often one to another.

Still, it should not be forgotten, lest any deceive themselves, that to talk about religion, ministers and sermons, missions and missionaries, religious schemes and books, revivalists and revivals, is not religion. Some have been the most fluent talkers about these things who felt them least. Shallow rivers are commonly noisy rivers ; and the drum is loud because it is hollow. Fluency and feeling don't always go together. On the contrary, some men are most sparing of speech when their feelings are most deeply engaged. I have been told that there is an awful silence in the ranks before the first gun is fired, and little talking heard during the dreadful progress of the battle, or sound, save the roar of cannon, the cries of wounded, the shouts of attack, the bursts of musketry, and bugles sounding the charge. And I have also heard men say, that when the ship is laboring for her life, and every moment may decide her

fate, and whether she shall clear reef or headland hangs in anxious suspense, there is no talking, nothing heard amid the roaring of the storm but the voice of officers, as they shout forth their orders—to cut away the mast—let go the sails—or put the helm hard a-port. Deep passions, like deep waters, often run silent ; and men in earnest are more given to act than to talk. True, Out of the fulness of the heart the mouth speaketh ; still, the fuller the heart is, the less fluent sometimes is the speech. There are things too deep for utterance. Strong gratitude, deep love, are not fluent ; nor is intense anxiety. The sight of her child wrapped in flames, or tottering on the edge of a precipice, has paralyzed its mother ; rooted to the ground—she has gazed in speechless horror, unable to raise a shriek, or move a foot to save it.

Besides, owing, perhaps, to constitutional peculiarities, the religion of some has its most perfect emblem in Christ's own words, Ye are the light of the world. It is a thing seen, not heard ; it shines, but it makes no sound ; not often found on their lips, but always in their lives. Who, that ever heard, has forgotten a story told by Dr. Chalmers when he pleaded for the right of Christian congregations to reject a minister against whom they felt, but could not state, objections ? A woman sought admission to the Lord's table. At her examination she broke down ; unable to give her pastor any satisfactory answers, she was dumb, or her replies were such as made her appear stupid and ignorant. He did not feel that he could admit her to the table of the Lord ; and told her so. Cut to the heart she rose ; she

reached the door ; but, ere she left, with the tear shining in her eye, and in tones that went to the good man's heart, she said, referring to our Lord, "Sir, though I cannot speak for Him, I could die for Him!" Blessed speech ! and blessed woman ! the gate of heaven was opening to her advancing steps !

Such love to Jesus Christ is the soul of true religion. And without their becoming loud talkers, or making a parade of piety, it will lead those that feel its power to "exhort one another daily;" to try to bring sinners to the Saviour ; and—as many who have overcome a false modesty are now doing—to seize all opportunities of dealing faithfully with other men about their souls. Why should not we tell others the way to heaven if we ourselves have found it ? Why should not we warn a man who, unconscious of his danger, is approaching the brink of ruin ? Why should not we snatch the poisoned chalice from a brother's lips ? Why should not we reach a hand down to the drowning, and pluck him from the jaws of death, and seat him beside us on the rock where there is room for both ? If people are loud in the praises of the physician who has cured them of some deadly malady—recommending others to trust and seek his skill, why should not Christ's people crown Him with equal honors, commend Him to a dying world, and proclaim what He has done for them ? Let them say with David, Come, all ye that fear the Lord, and I will tell what He hath done for my soul ; and tread in the steps of the Samaritan who threw away her pitcher, and, running to the city, brought them all out—crying,

Come see a man who hath told me all things that I have ever done.

It is a bad thing ostentatiously to parade religion ; but it is a base thing for a Christian man to be ashamed of it ; not to stand by his colors ; by his silence, if not his speech, to deny his Master ; to sneak away, like a coward, out of the fight. Stand up for Christ everywhere ; speak for Him ; suffer the scorn of the world for Him ; and, among the ungodliest crew, quit you like men, saying,

“ I’m not ashamed to own my Lord,
Or to defend His cause,
Maintain the glory of His cross,
And honor all His laws.

“ Jesus, my Lord ! I know His name,
His name is all my boast ;
Nor will He put my soul to shame,
Nor let my hope be lost.”

Religion does not lie *in cherishing bitter feelings towards those who differ from us.*

“ Be slow to wrath,” says St. James, “ for the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God. If any man among you seem to be religious and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man’s religion is vain.” From a small town that lay in the bosom of gently swelling hills, rose, some with spires and some without them, three or four churches, belonging to the chief denominations of our country—the sign at once of our religious liberties and religious earnestness. On a sweet summer evening a traveller looked along the valley on this peaceful scene, when a shower of rain was falling. Suddenly the sun

broke out, and flung a bright bow on the cloud, that, like that of mercy, discharged its showers on all. The rainbow encircled within its arms suburb and city, lofty church and humble meeting-house. And was it not a true and happy fancy that saw in this heavenly bow an emblem of that covenant which, irrespective of minor differences, embraces all believers within the same arms of mercy?

How different from this genial spirit that of gloomy bigotry! Scowling on charity, it would probably pronounce that thought about the rainbow to have more poetry than piety in it. I would not be uncharitable even to uncharitableness; but it is very unlovely. It holds the truth; but it is in unrighteousness. It contends for the truth; but it is with unholy passions—often persuading itself that it is religious when it is but rancorous. Some appear to think that to be narrow-minded is to be heavenly-minded. A great mistake! The black, bitter sloe of the hedges appears in the garden with the fair hues and sweet juices of the plum; and it is certainly no proof that a man's temper is sanctified that it is sour. Christians never should forget the meaning hidden in the very form which the Holy Spirit assumed when He dropped from the skies on our Saviour's head. The rapacious eagle, grasping thunderbolts in his talons, and sacred to Jove among the heathens, or rushing down from the rock on his quarry, has been the favorite ensign of bloody conquerors, and ambitious kings; now, not it, but that gentle bird which, they say, has no gall, and is sacred to love, and whose snowy plumage was never dyed with a victim's

blood, descends yonder by the quiet banks of Jordan on the head of Jesus. I do not say that religious men have never cherished an exclusive and narrow spirit. I admit that some excellent men have done so.

Still, it is not religion to speak bitterly of those who differ from us ; it is not religion to minister at the altar with "strange fire;" it is not religion to serve the cause of a loving God with unlovely passions ; it is not religion to defend Christ's crown with other weapons than His own sword ; it is not religion to be serious on light, and great on little things ; it is not religion to exalt points to the place of principles ; it is not religion to contend as earnestly for forms of worship as for the faith of the gospel ; it is anything but religion to dip our pens in gall, to give the tongue unbridled license, and so to speak of others as to recall these words of Scripture—Their teeth are spears and arrows, and their tongue a sharp sword. There is no religion in the narrow, sectarian, exclusive prejudices which say, Can any good thing come out of Nazareth ?

In this imperfect state, it is perhaps as impossible for two parties, as it is for flint and steel, to come into collision without eliciting some sparks of fire. It were foolish to expect that there should be nothing said or done in a time of religious controversy, which good men will see no reason afterwards to regret and to recall ; for that were to expect lesser men to be greater than apostles—holier than St. Paul and Barnabas, between whom, as we are told, there rose a "sharp contention." Nor even after the contro-

versies have ceased, need we wonder that their unhappy influences do not always, and all at once, cease with them. That were such a miracle as was only seen in Galilee, when at Christ's voice the winds and waves went down at once, and together. It is with human passion as with the sea, when violently agitated, stirred by some storm to its briny depths ; it continues, hours after the wind has ceased, to swell, and heave, and roll its foaming breakers on the beach. We are not to wonder that wounds received in controversy, like those received in battle, take some time to heal. It is reasonable to expect that ; though, as it were a bad sign of a man's constitution, if his wounds, however deep, turned into running sores, there is something wrong, unhallowed, and unchristian in our spirit, if grace does not soften the asperities, and time close the wounds of controversy.

There is a time of peace, says Solomon, as well as a time of war ; and when fields, white for the harvest, call Christians to sheath their swords and put in their sickles, he must be a stranger to the spirit of the gospel whose cry is, My voice is still for war. War ? "They are for war, I am for peace," said David. And they who have imbibed most of the spirit of their Master, even when contending for the faith, will engage in quarrels with reluctance, and end them with pleasure. The Christian graces, like spice-bearing trees, grow best under serene and sunny skies. Nor should Christian men ever enter keenly into any controversy that is not vital, unless it involve matters of paramount importance. The theology of our life

should be the theology of the death-bed, amid whose solemn, deepening shadows small points and matters of form dwindle out of sight ; or rather are lost in the blaze of coming glory. The loftiest piety ever attaches the lowest importance to party badges and ecclesiastical distinctions ; and the holier the Christian grows, he will more and more resemble the holly tree, which, as it rises, and gets away from the ground, and shoots its top up to heaven, loses the thorny prickles from its leaves. Be assured that tenderness of heart, and gentleness of spirit, mark the highest form of Christianity ; and that the true fire of the Spirit, the celestial flame—like that which fell at Pentecost, blazes but never burns. Let the same mind be in you, therefore, that was in Jesus Christ ; otherwise, whatever be our creed, we are none of His.

Religion does not lie *in knowledge, or the observance of religious forms.*

A man who rose on the wings of genius from obscurity to the highest fame, was, on an occasion of a visit to Edinburgh, walking with one who plumed himself on his wealth, and rank, and ancient family. As they strolled along the street, Burns—for of him I speak—encountered a country acquaintance, attired in rustic dress ; he seized him by the hand ; and leaving his companion offended and astonished, he linked his arm in the rustic's. With a manner that bespoke esteem and admiration of his humble friend, the poet made his way through the brilliant crowd that worshipped his genius, and ruined his morals. On returning, he was met with expressions of

surprise that he could so demean himself, and stoop to walk the streets among his fashionable admirers with one in such a vulgar garb. "Fool," said Burns, his dark eye flashing, and his soul rising above the base pleasures and pursuits he had sunk to in high society, and returning to its own native region of noble sentiments; "Fool," he said, "it was not the dress, the peasant's bonnet and the hoddern gray, I spoke to, but to the man within; the man who beneath that bonnet has a head, and under that hoddern gray a heart better than yours, or a thousand such as yours." Nobly said! A true distinction—too often forgotten, between the man and his externals! Nor is this distinction anywhere more true, important, vital, than in the Church of God. Be it gorgeous like that of Rome in her stately temples, or simple like that of our fathers, with the blue heavens for a canopy, a lone glen for their church, the gray stones of the moor for communion tables, and, for music to the wild strain of their psalms, the dash of a waterfall or the roar of breakers—the ritual of a church is but her dress. And what more than his dress is a man's profession of piety, his religious forms and observances—those peculiar to the Sabbath, or common to every day? They may be worn by the dead as well as the living. While St. Paul exhorts us to "hold fast the form of sound words," he speaks of some as "lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God;" as "having the form of godliness, but denying the power thereof;" and there may be much of that in these days when, in contrast to the profane swearing,

and deep drinking, and loose morals, and open neglect of worship both in the family and in the church, of the last century, religion is rather fashionable than otherwise. She now walks, to use John Bunyan's figure, in golden slippers on the sunny side of the street.

Let us beware ! Form, dress, and paint are not life. In the studio of the artist, and, in the shape of man or woman, there stands a figure, the first sudden sight of which strikes most with surprise, and makes some start with fear. Is it dead or alive ? Supplied with joints that admit of motion, attired in the common garb of men or women, seated in a chair, or standing in easy attitude on the floor, it might pass for life, but for that still and changeless posture, those speechless lips, and fixed staring eyes. It is a man of wood. Cold paint, not warm blood, gives the color to its cheek ; no busy brain thinks within that skull ; no kind heart loves, or fervid passions burn within that breast. The *lay figure* that the artist dresses up to help him to represent the folds, the lights and shadows of the drapery, it is but death attired in the clothes of life ; and, like a hypocrite or formalist in the sight of God, is offensive rather than otherwise. And, as the dress there, however rich and costly, true and skilfully arranged, does not make a living man, no more do the observance of religion, attendance at church, going to the communion, closet prayer, family worship, the daily reading of God's Word, make a religious man—a living Christian.

Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves, says St. James ; and, to

take that example, though some may think they are religious because they read the Scriptures daily, religion does not consist in reading God's Word, nor in going to church to hear it preached, Sabbath by Sabbath. I say nothing against hearing ; God forbid. We are not to neglect the assembling of ourselves together. It is well to hear ; to pitch our tent where manna falls ; to sit by the pool where an angel stirs the waters, and descends to heal ; to go up to the mountain of the Lord, that, surmounted by the cross, and trodden by the feet of saints, has conducted many to the skies ; and on which, like mountain ranges that attract the clouds, and are watered by many showers that never fall in the valleys, the blessing most frequently and fully descends—God loveth the gates of Zion more than all the tabernacles of Jacob. But will hearing a discourse on fire warm a man ? on meat, feed him ? on medicine, cure him ? If not, no more will it save us to know all about the Saviour. It will no more take a man to heaven than it will take him to France, or Rome, or Jerusalem, that he knows the way. We must go, as well as know—travel, as well as be able to trace out the route. We get Christ presented to our acceptance every day ; but what of that ? What will that avail us, unless we accept of Him ? Have we done that ? It is not an offered but an accepted Saviour—nor is it the word heard, but the word done, diligently, habitually, prayerfully done, that will bring us to the kingdom of heaven.

Otherwise, hearing, according to St. James, is like merely looking into a glass, which never yet arranged woman's hair, or washed man's dirty face.

We see the faces of others, not our own—not our own otherwise than by reflection. The wild beauty of the forest bends over some placid pool to feed her vanity, and admire charms that unadorned are adorned the most; and before an artificial mirror her refined and polished sisters, with ornaments borrowed from birds, and beasts, and worms, the mines of earth and depths of ocean, may stand bedecked, and armed for conquests over fools. To such a looking-glass, but cast for another purpose, the apostle St. James compares God's Word. It is given of God that we may see ourselves spotted and stained with sin; and seeing that, may go to wash away the foul pollution in the blood of Christ. And the mere hearers of the word, before whom I would hold up this heavenly glass to show the dark stains that lie not on their faces, but on their souls, what are they? They are like one that having seen his foul face reflected in a faithful mirror, goes away, not to wash it, but to forget all about it. Their religion lies all in hearing—not at all in doing. It is therefore vain.

To know the way to heaven, sometimes to cast a longing eye in that direction, and by fit and start to make a feeble effort heavenwards, can end in nothing. Man must get the Spirit of God. Thus only can we be freed of the shackles that bind the soul to earth, the flesh, and sin. I have seen a captive eagle, caged far from its distant home, as he sat mournful-like on his perch, turn his eye sometimes heavenwards; there he would sit in silence, like one wrapt in thought, gazing through the bars of his cage up into the blue sky; and, after a while, as if noble but sleeping instincts had

suddenly awoke, he would start and spread out his broad sails, and leap upward, revealing an iron chain that, usually covered by his plumage, drew him back again to his place. But though this bird of heaven knew the way to soar aloft, and sometimes, under the influence of old instincts, decayed but not altogether dead, felt the thirst for freedom, freedom was not for him, till a power greater than his own proclaimed liberty to the captive, and shattered the shackle that bound him to his perch. Nor is there freedom for us till the Holy Spirit set us free, and, by the lightning force of truth, breaks the chains that bind us to sin,—till, with the way laid open by the blood of His covenant, Jesus says to the Spirit,—Loose him, and let him go ; let him fly ; let him spurn the earth, and, on the wings of faith and prayer, soar away upward to the gates of glory. For that end, come Lord Jesus, come quickly !

Belonging to a church, or sect, said Baron Bunsen on his death-bed, is nothing. The direction which the mind of that great and good man took on some theological subjects is much to be regretted—very much to be deplored. We have no sympathy with it. Yet, in those solemn hours when the shadow of death falls on the bed, and the depths of the soul rise to the surface, few have borne themselves more Christianly than Bunsen, or in their dying utterances, with failing, faltering breath, brought out more clearly, more beautifully, more attractively, the spirit of pure, undefiled, living, loving, true religion. I have spoken of it ; he speaks it. Let us, for an example of the religion that lies not dead in forms, but lives in faith

and love, turn our steps to the chamber where Bunsen is dying, amid the glories of a brilliant sunset—emblem of his own—the tears of his family, and the regrets of the world : “ My best experience,” he said, “ is that of having known Jesus Christ. I leave this world without hating any one. No, no hatred : hatred is an accursed thing. Oh! how good it is to look upon life from this elevation. One then perceives what an obscure existence we have led upon earth. Upward ! upward ! It becomes not darker ; but always brighter, brighter. I am now in the kingdom. O my God, how beautiful are thy tabernacles ! Let us part in Jesus Christ. God is life, love,—love that wills ; will that loves. I see Christ, and I see God through Christ. I am dying, and I wish to die ; I offer my blessing, the blessing of an old man, to all who desire it ; I die in peace with all the world. Those who live in Christ, in loving Him, those are His. Those who do not live by His life do not belong to Him, by whatever name they may call themselves, and whatever confession of faith they may sign. Belonging to a church or sect is nothing. I see clearly that we are all sinners ; we have only Christ in God ; all else is nothing. Christ is the Son of God, and we are His children only when the spirit of love which was in Christ is in us.”

This is a voice from the grave ; or rather from those heavens to which, notwithstanding their mistakes and errors, true believers in Christ go to join their Lord. How grand these last utterances of a long, honored, brilliant, and useful life ! One among the greatest of his age in learning, and

science, and humanity, and statesmanship, Bunsen left the world with this sentence ringing in its ears, —To love God in Christ is all: to belong to a church or sect is nothing—all else is nothing.

Doing Good, and Being Good.

“Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.”—ST. JAMES i. 27.

WITH a natural sagacity that has been mistaken for prophecy, some men have seen far ahead of them. It is related of John Knox, for example, that he sent a message from his death-bed to Kirkcaldy of Grange, who then held Edinburgh Castle, warning him to repent and turn from his evil ways, else he should be hanged up by the neck before the sun. He did not repent ; and he was hanged, exactly as Knox predicted. This was not prophecy. The Reformer's vision had not become clearer as he drew near eternity ; for there, as on other shores, the fog lies thickest. It grows darker rather than clearer as we are leaving the world ; and the change at death is perhaps as sudden as at birth—in a moment out of the profoundest darkness into a blaze of light. The prediction was due to the sagacity by which Knox was able to anticipate the probable issue of the circumstances in which Kirkcaldy had placed himself ; of the dangerous game he was playing. With such sagacity, though otherwise applied, Captain Cook, the great navigator, when engaged in the survey of New Zealand, before the foot of a white man was ever planted on

its shores, predicted the day when these remote islands, lying on the other side of the globe, almost beneath our feet, would become a valuable British colony. Nearly a century before the tide of emigration set that way, he saw our flag flying in its harbors, our shepherds feeding their flocks on its fern-covered hills, and perchance the unhappy wars which now rage there—to our shame, I fear—certainly to the sorrow of its stout and gallant natives. Curiously enough, his foreknowledge grew like their fruit on the New Zealand trees. Sailing along, he saw these unknown shores covered, not with low scrub or brushwood, but with gigantic timber ; and—a sagacious man—he concluded that the soil must be deep, and rich, and strong, since none other could rear such forest giants.

Now, what is true of the nature of the soil is equally true of the religion of the soul. You can always judge of it by what it yields. In both cases the crop is the test of character. By their fruits, says our Lord, ye shall know them. The soil is known by its trees ; and the trees are known by their fruit. True of the vineyard of the husbandman, this is true also of the Church—the vineyard of the Lord. It is not, therefore, what we profess, but practise ; it is not what a man says with his tongue, or signs with his hand, but what he does with his heart, that settles his religion in the sight of God, and on the great day of judgment shall settle his fate. Heaven is allotted to well-doers—the holy, loving, kind, gentle, merciful ; but ill-doers—the impious, the unholy, the greedy, the grasping, the cruel, the pitiless, shall have their portion in hell. Hear our Lord ! To those on His

right hand He says, Well done ; not well said, or well believed, or well professed, or even well designed, but, Well done, good and faithful servants enter ye into the joy of your Lord ; to those on the left again, Depart from me, for I have never known you, ye workers of iniquity.

The great Stagyrite thus opens one of his immortal works, This book is written not for knowledge but for action. And for what other end was the Bible written—written by men, and inspired of Heaven ? Not that we might know the truth, but do it ; not that we might know the way to heaven, but travel it ; not that we might know, but accept of an offered Saviour. Religion does not consist in doctrinal or prophetical speculations ; nor lie like a corpse entombed in old dusty confessions. She lives in action, and walks abroad among mankind—calling us to leave our books, to shut our Bibles, to rise from our knees, and go forth with hearts full of love and hands full of charities. According to St James, Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.

Such is true religion *in the judgment of “God and the Father.”*

God and the Father ! what a blessed conjunction ! God and the Father ! that might breed hope in the darkest bosom ; for who, though lying in deepest dungeon, despairs of mercy that knows he is to be tried by his own father ? To be tried by our Father ! Is not that to be assured of pity and tenderness, of great allowance for our infirmities, and of a kinder consideration both of

our difficulties and defects than angels or men would give? This goes far to divest a judgment-day of its terrors. Our Father is to try us; then may we sing—

“ Such pity as a father hath
Unto his children dear;
Like pity shows the Lord to such
As worship Him in fear.”

Looking with fond and partial eyes on his children, how slow is a father to discover their faults, and how ready to cover them! He approves and applauds their feeblest efforts to please him. See, though her song may violate the rules both of time and tune, how the father smiles on the fairy form that, with laughing eye, and golden locks, and blushing cheek, warbles out an infant's song to please him. But what father is like our Father that is in heaven! How easily is He pleased, and how largely He rewards! Why, He promises even a crown of glory for a cup of water given to a disciple, and raises to a throne all that have learned lessons of love, and kindness, and humility—sitting at Jesus's feet. He raiseth the poor out of the dust, and lifteth the needy out of the dunghill, that He may set him with princes—for Christ's sake forgiving our greatest faults, and rewarding our smallest works.

Still, though God will not look for perfection in our works as if they were to save those that are saved only by the righteousness of Christ, the final judgment is to turn on works. Look at the picture of that last judgment, as it was drawn by Christ's own hand! The trumpet has sounded;

and at its long, loud, and solemn summons, the graves have given up their dead. Coming from their sepulchres, whether in the tombs of earth or the caves of ocean, the whole family of man is met for the first time, and met for the last—an innumerable multitude, above whose heads, in high and solitary majesty, rises the great white throne. The Son of Man, attended by all the holy angels, descends. Now the work begins. Some men of science suppose that the gold we dig out of its veins was originally diffused through the rock; and that at some remote period, and by a power unknown to us, its atoms, separated from the earthy mass, and made to pass through it, were deposited in the veins where they now lie. By a power as mighty and mysterious, that, breaking up families which had slept and rose together, sunders for ever the tenderest relationships, the mingled mass of men is separated. Even as a shepherd, says our Lord, divideth the sheep from the goats, the crowd is divided—these move to the right, those to the left. And now, amid an awful silence, and in a voice distinctly heard at the farthest bounds of the mighty crowd, the Judge pronounces sentence; and gives reasons for it. And what turns the balance in His hand? Not the churches men belonged to; nor the creeds they signed; nor the doctrines they espoused, believed, defended, even died for. No, it turns upon works. Listen—He says, I was an hungered and ye gave me meat; or, I was an hungered and ye gave me no meat. Visitors of prisons, clothers of the naked, feeders of the hungry, advocates of the wronged, husbands of

widows, fathers of orphans, bearing names unknown in courts or camps, or in the seats of learning and of science, but household words in the homes of sorrow—rising from graves you were borne to amid the griefs of the poor and needy, the crowns are for you. But for you, whether high or low, that wrapped yourselves up in narrow selfishness, the curse. No religion shall be owned then, but what now sheds blessings on misery, and lights up with rainbow hues the cloud of human sorrow.

Do not suppose because I speak thus of works, that I substitute them for Christ ; or that I hold evangelical doctrine and sound views of divine truth, as is the fashion now, at a discount—as of small consequence. No—I say, Hold fast the form of sound words—Contend earnestly for the faith which was once delivered to the saints—Try the spirits whether they be of God. Right views of divine truth are of the highest importance ; for how can a vessel reach her harbor if her compass and charts be wrong ? Doctrines are the seeds of duties ; and it proves nothing to the contrary that some good men have held grave errors. They were good, and got to heaven, not in consequence of their errors, but in spite of them ; for as many men are worse, some men are better than their creeds. With gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble, and a vast quantity of rubbish, they rest on the Rock ; and shall be saved so as by fire. Under the influences of the Spirit, endowed with the grace of God and love of Christ, the rightness of their hearts overcomes the wrongness of their heads, and so they get to heaven : as I have seen

a ship, under a power generated from water by fires that glowed within her hold, cross the roaring bar, and in the face of adverse wind and tide, plough her way safe into harbor.

It has not been worldlings that have done most for the world. Your creatures of fashion and lovers of pleasure, who has met them where misery dwells? If they repair to the haunts of crime, it is not to cure it. Nor is it those who talk lightly of doctrines, and profess to have neither taste nor time for religious questions, but men like Luther, that were strong in doctrine, and sound in faith, and ready to contend for it—men of ardent piety, men great in prayer, that have done most to mend the miseries of the world; and, leaving their footprints on the sands of time, have been most blessed while they lived, and most missed when they died. It cannot be otherwise; it is not in the nature of things that it should be otherwise. A belief in our lost state, in the sacrifice of a divine Redeemer, in the free gifts and grace of God, is intimately connected with the whole circle of Christian charities—is the centre from which they radiate. How can he in whose eyes all out of Christ are perishing, hanging over hell, dream away life in idle pleasures? In the light of redemption, the outcast, the vile thing many would not touch, shines like a diamond on a dust heap. The condescension of the Son of God teaches me to stoop—not to the great, but to the ground, to pluck the foulest from the gutter. Feeling that I am forgiven much, I am ready to forgive; and that I have gotten much, I am ready to give. God's costly gift to me, the free gift of His dear Son, both opens my hand, and

warms my heart. Melted by His love and mercy, my icy selfishness gives way ; and like a lake loosened from its wintry chains, my bounty flows freely out to others. His generosity begets my own. As in His light I see light, in His love I feel love. It is the sight of Jesus stepping from His throne to lie in a manger, and to die on a cross, that most of all inclines me to forget myself—like Him, to deny myself, that I may live and labor for the good of others. Thus, as St. Paul says, the love of Christ constraineth us, because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead, and that He died for all, that they who live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him who died for them and rose again.

True religion consists "*in visiting the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and in keeping ourselves unspotted from the world.*"

To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, from natural pity, is beautiful ; and may be called virtuous. We commend, and admire it. Still, though it cannot be true that there are people who are very religious, and yet not kind, people may be kind who are not religious. Visits and deeds of charity, to become religious, pious actions, besides springing from natural compassion, must be done in obedience to the will, and out of regard to the glory of God. The most common action, such as sweeping a floor or kindling a fire, when done because God has bidden it, and done well that He may be glorified, and religion not despised but honored, rises into piety ; and thus a humble servant cleaning shoes may be doing a thing as truly religious as a divine preaching from

a pulpit, or an angel singing in the skies. Great and lofty deeds, on the other hand, that, though crowning their authors with honor, and filling the mouths of men, are done without any regard to God, have not an atom of religion. Therefore it has been said, that the virtues of an unconverted, ungodly man, are but splendid vices. They are without value in the judgment and sight of God.

But to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and keep one's garments unspotted from the world, under the influence of the holiest motives, and with a view to the highest ends, though here called pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father, is not the sum-total of true religion. These are but samples of the stock—the small segments of a large circle. Here, as elsewhere in Scripture, a part, or parts, is put for the whole; and these two are selected for this among other reasons, that they are characteristic and most important; not secondary but primary; not accidental, but essential features of all true religion. To make this plainer, it is as if I described a living man by saying he breathes. But he does many things else. He sees and hears; he walks and talks; he thirsts and hungers—and a hundred things besides. Still, unless he breathes, he is not alive, but dead; and dead is the religion which does not aim at these two things, personal purity and active charity; in other words, doing good and being good.

It is interesting to discover this truth enshrined within the name we apply to the Divine Being. God! where got we that word, God? It is not Hebrew; nor Greek; nor Latin. It was invented

by our forefathers. Though rude and ignorant, and little acquainted with the arts and sciences, these half-savage men seem to have penetrated the mysteries of true religion, and caught its lovely spirit. Having dismissed Woden, and Thor, and Tuesco, their stern and wild and bloody gods, to embrace the Christian faith, they had to invent a name for the new object of their worship. Leaving Rome to borrow her forms and garments from heathen temples, and dress up the new faith in the cast-off clothes of the old, our ancestors neither chose Jove from the heathens, nor even Jehovah from the Jews ; nor, selecting the power, or knowledge, or justice, or offices of the Divine Being, called Him the Almighty, or the Omniscient, or the Wise, or the Just, or the King. Regarding goodness as the most prominent, and to sinners as the most engaging and winning feature of His character, because He was good, and ever doing good, because He was in His nature perfectly holy, and to all His creatures infinitely kind, they called Him Good, abbreviating it into God. God and Good are certainly the self-same words ; and nobody, therefore, can be God's that is not good ; who does not seek to do good, as well as to be good.

That any calling themselves Christians should believe or act otherwise, is shocking ; is a scandal to religion, and enough to make it stink, like a dead carcass, in the nostrils of sceptics and scoffers. Yet read this passage of a letter from a lady, who, touched with divine compassion for a class of wretched outcasts, is appealing for help. "I suppose you are aware," she writes, "that the Chris-

tianity of the——(I shall not say what part of our country) is not aggressive ; they have a prejudice against working Christians as superficial ones ; and if we are therefore to attempt to strike at the root of the degradation of this class, we must ask help from your quarter." Alas for religion ! thus caricatured and misrepresented ; held up to the pity of good men, and the scorn of bad, as a lifeless system of effete doctrines and beliefs—deaf, dumb, and dead to the miseries of mankind ! That true religion ? No ; and no more like it than a dry skeleton, hung by the neck from the ceiling of an anatomical theatre, and grinning grimly down on the students' faces, is like yon man bending to the helm, and steering the life-boat ashore ; or yon man, sword in hand, fighting freedom's battle ; or yon man, with fire in his eye and pathos on his tongue, pleading amid plaudits or hisses the cause of the slave ; or yon good Samaritan stooping over a suffering brother, and binding up his gaping wounds ; or yon gentlewoman, whom we meet on foul, dank stair, concealing bread for the hungry beneath her cloak, or find on her knees at the bed of dying penitence, wiping off the clammy death-sweat, and smoothing a thorny pillow with the consolations of religion.

Working Christians, superficial Christians ! Christianity not aggressive ! Hear, O heavens ! and be astonished, O earth, that bore on thy dusty roads and Galilee's sandy shores, the prints of Jesus's feet ; and saw Him going about continually doing good ! From that deformity, that vile abortion let me turn your eyes away to the religion that illumines the pages of the Bible, and walked a

world which crucified it, in the blessed form of our Divine Redeemer.

Let us successively study the two features of pure and undefiled religion of St. James's picture.

It appears *in acts of charity*.

The widow and orphan are selected as the representatives of all human sorrow—their case needing our help most, and appealing loudest to our pity. It even touches us to see widowhood symbolized, there, where a tree, around which some beautiful creeper had wound its arms, spangling its robust form with flowers, lies on the ground, felled by the axe, its head prostrate in the dust ; while that tender plant, crushed and bleeding but still alive, clings with fond embraces to the dead. More touching still, when the mother bird has been struck down by the hawk, to look into the bush of golden gorse where her orphan brood sit pining in their cold nest, with no mother now to sing to them ; to feed them ; to cover them with her warm wings—left to die unless they move the pity of some sweet child or tender woman.

Sin has not so utterly blotted out the beautiful lineaments of God, but that helplessness goes to our hearts ; this, as well as some other lovely flowers, continue to grow on the ruins of our fallen greatness. In busiest hours, when other intrusion would be resented, let any one enter in the garb of a widow, pale and sad, her eyes consumed with grief, she commands our attention and respect ; and on these streets where the hearse, parting the tide of business, comes with its nodding plumes, how touching it is to see two or three little boys

following a father to the grave ; only more touching, where poverty's one room holds the dead and living, to see an infant, attracted by the glitter, break away from kind friends to rattle the handles of a mother's coffin, and smile—pleased with the sound. I have seen that sight raise roughest hands to wipe tears from eyes unused to weep.

Widow and orphan ! there is something sacred to our ears in these names. Over widows and orphans, as well as over weeping penitents, the Man of sorrows casts His shield. Their wrongs stirred His placid spirit to its deepest depths. He made no complaint of wrongs inflicted on Himself ; He bore His own sufferings with divine meekness ; reviled, maligned, spit upon, crowned with thorns, nailed to the tree, He was dumb, nor opened His mouth—save to pray for His enemies. But He could not stand by and see the widow and orphan wronged. See how He steps up to yonder sleek and oily Pharisee praying on the widow's floor, that he might prey on the widow's substance, and strikes the mask from his face, saying, Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees ! hypocrites, for ye devour widows' houses, and for pretence make long prayers—ye serpents and generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell ? Harlots can ; publicans can ; and thieves can ; the Canaanite and Samaritan can ; but robbers of the widow, how can ye ? There you have a commentary, by way of contrast, on the words—"Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is to visit the widow and fatherless in their affliction." I do not believe in the Christianity that is not Christ-like : and I no more believe in a pro-

fession of piety which is not associated with His pity than in a sun that sheds no light—in a fire that gives out no heat—in a rose that breathes no perfume ; they are mere painting : life-like, but dead ; clever, but cold. People may talk of such and such a man being godly ; but none are godly but the godlike. God is the “Judge of the widow, and the Father of the fatherless in his holy habitation ;” and he only is godlike who stands to widows in the room of the dead, and in whom orphans find both a father and a friend.

True religion will express itself *in personal, actual visits to widows and fatherless in their affliction.*

The circumstances of some are such, that they can bequeath at death what they could not afford to part with in their lifetime ; but there is no charity in leaving money, which we could now spare, to do good when we are dead. There is no self-denial—no cross-bearing in that. If we could carry the money along with us to another world, there might be virtue in leaving it behind ; but since we cannot, and have to leave the world as naked as we entered it, there is none. In fact, we are giving away what is not ours,—what ceases to be ours the moment of our death,—what our right to expires with life. Men are called by the apostle to mortify the flesh with its affections and lusts ; but by such *mortifications*, as they are called in Scotland, men do not mortify themselves, but their heirs—whom they cheat of their expectations, to purchase a worthless name. The fortunes that rear such falsely splendid charities prove nothing in favor of the donors ; but rather the

reverse. They only show how hard, and cold, and grasping, and avaricious these men and women were ; and that only death could compel the miser to relax his iron gripe of the widow's and orphan's bread. Whatsoever thy hand, therefore, findeth to do, do it with thy might ; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, to be found in the grave whither thou goest.

Now, in regard to the works of charity which religion requires, it is a pity that some, willing and anxious to do them, should miss the way of doing them well. They overlook the importance of giving a literal obedience to the words of St. James. They help, but they do not *visit*, personally visit the widows and fatherless in their affliction. Such direct intercourse is of as great advantage to those that give as to those that get ; softening, if not sanctifying, the hearts of both. Many do not seem to know how much charity resembles a delicate perfume that, by being poured from one vessel into another, loses the finest part of its aroma : and that to awaken gratitude, it is not sufficient that the giver dole out his bounty through a middle party—by the hands of a hired, and it may be a hard, official. Let thirsty lips drink, not at the pipe, but where the grateful spring bubbles up fresh and cold from its native fountain. Wherever possible, therefore, distribute your charities with your own hand ; for there is much the same difference between sending your servant, or the agent of a society, and carrying the gifts yourselves, that there was between Gehazi with his master's staff, and the living prophet—the first may fill the hand, but, as when

Elisha took the dead boy in his arms, it is the last that sets the heart a-beating. The kindly visit, the look, the tone, the starting tear of sympathy, the patient attention to the tale of suffering, these make our gold or silver shine with double brightness, and impart a double sweetness to the bread we give. By this, without lowering yourself, you will lift up the poor; and win them, perhaps, to God and goodness. A hand laid kindly on a child's head has been laid on a mother's heart; and with hold of that, God helping you, you may save the perishing, and steer a whole household right to heaven. See, whether you eat or drink, or give meat and drink, you do all to the glory of God.

Some think that they have no leisure or means to undertake such missions. Roman Catholics leave them to Sisters of Charity; and we, in these Protestant lands, too much to hired agents, benevolent societies, and kind Christian women. Now, though not able personally to do all that we wish, we should do all that we can; for I am sure that to be brought into personal contact with the poor is good both for us and them. How much is in our power "the day will reveal," when, called by name, some of once straitened circumstances and humble life shall step out from the crowd to hear the Judge say, "I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: I was sick and in prison, and ye visited me; for inasmuch as ye did it unto one of the least of these, ye did it unto me." Woe that day to them who find time to visit the great, and rich, and noble, but the

poor never ; time to spend on luxurious banquets, and at theatres and balls, where delicate feet thread the gay dance, that never stood on the bare floors of poverty ; who regale with music ears that never listened to the wail of widows, or the moaning child that cried for bread and its mother has none to give it ; who stoop to worship wealth and rank, but never to raise the fallen, or bend, with words of comfort, over the bed of some poor, trembling, dying sinner ! “ Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you ; your gold and silver is cankered, the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire.”

None are without time and means for such missions of mercy. To convince you, let me guide you to a scene where pure and undefiled religion stands before us in those who had little time to spare, and less money to spend. Enter this foul close with me ; bend your head to this low-browed door ; climb one dark stair, another, and still another. Now, you are in a cold, empty garret ; and there, beneath a patched and dusky skylight, lies a dying woman, a stranger in a strange land ; beside whose lowly pallet stands a pale, gentle, weeping child. Called to many a dying bed, I have seen death in all shapes and forms—some despairing ; some rejoicing ; many afraid to let go, and clinging to the earth ; others eager to be gone ; but that garret, where I knelt on the bare floor, seemed nearer than any to heaven. It seemed as if the angels that carried the beggar to Abraham’s bosom were there

waiting the last sinking breath to bear that saintly spirit to the skies. I saw not them ; but in the room where the orphan stood by her mother's corpse, seemingly without a friend in all the world, I met two God-sent angel-women. They took the child to their own home. Bereft of one mother, in them she found two. They shared their scanty meals with her ; and when the world was sleeping, plied their needles to earn her bread, to send her to school, to rear her in comely virtues, and shield her young head and heart in an evil world. What inspired this noble generosity ? They had come from the country, and were themselves poor ; but touched with the sight of much poverty greater than their own, they resolved that though they could not do much, they would do what they could. If many around them must perish, they could, at least, save one ; and so, each taking this sinking child by the hand, with the other free, these sisters buffeted the billows of adverse fortune, and, unknown to the world, but amid the applause of Jesus, and of angels that watched their progress from the skies, they brought the orphan in safety to the shore. There was pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father.

May the Spirit of God inspire you to go and do likewise. Better walk in the steps of these lowly women than in the dazzling train of queens. Better have our names written on the hearts of widows and the fatherless, than on the pages of immortal history. Let crawling worms creep upwards, and leave behind them the slime of their meanness, and base methods of reaching heights,

from which death's rude hand shall cast them down into the grave. Be it ours rather, like God's heavenly creatures—the sun, the rain, the dew—to descend in blessings on those beneath us. How many fruits that sun ripens, how many cold things he warms, how many flowers he paints and opens, how many birds he sets a-singing before he sinks in night! I would be the rain-drop that, ere it returns to its parent sea, leaves a blessing at some lowly root. Nay, I would be the tiny dew-drop that, glistening in the morning sunbeams, refreshes the lips of some thirsty flower ere, exhaled by the sun, it ascends to heaven! Do at least, some, and try to do much good ere you die. Seek to live loved, and to die lamented; to be blessed in life, and to be missed at death. Live so that over your grave, however lowly, they may raise a tombstone, inscribed with the words, "Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord; they rest from their labors, and their works do follow them."

Purity.

"Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world."—ST. JAMES i. 27.

DISTINGUISHED from other jewels that have but one color, such as the fiery ruby, the milk-white pearl, the sapphire that borrows its tint from the sky, and the emerald from the sea, diamonds owe their beauty, brilliancy, and costly value to this, that they burn with many hues. Turned round, they sparkle with shifting colors, as the light flashes from their different faces. Still, though it appears in this variety of aspects, the diamond is one gem—"pure and undefiled," as a dew-drop distilled from the skies. And why should not Christians believe that the Church of the living God is also one, though in forms of worship, ecclesiastical constitutions, and somewhat even in doctrines, it presents various aspects—as St. Paul says, "There are differences of administration, but the same Lord."

Like the costliest and most brilliant of gems, pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father presents itself under various aspects. Every one is beautiful, heavenly in its source—like the rays of the diamond caught from the sun; yet each differs from another, as much as

do the properties which St. James assigns to divine wisdom. In this passage, "the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy," we have something like a full description; but in saying that "pure and undefiled religion is to visit the widow and fatherless in their affliction, and keep himself unspotted from the world," the apostle does not attempt to give a full-length portrait. Out of many he mentions but two features; but these, though highly characteristic, neither embrace all the duties of a Christian's life, nor exhaust the graces of his character. On the contrary, as the sun in its annual course passes through all the signs of the zodiac, pure and undefiled religion, overlooking no commandment, but endeavoring to keep the entire law of God, walks the whole circle of Christian duties. Then, though some may be more prominent and more fully developed than others, the believer, "complete in Christ," is bedecked with every Christian grace. None are wanting; all are there, like the precious stones of the high priest's breastplate, when, with a blood-filled bowl of purest gold, wearing his crown, and robed in white, he drew aside the veil; and vanishing, entered into the Holy of Holies to commune alone with God. With this explanation, let us now study the second phase of true and undefiled religion.

It requires us *to keep ourselves unspotted from the world.*

An obstruction to our prayers, efforts, and progress meets us here, *in limine*,—on the very

threshold, which it is necessary to take out of the way. It lies in a feeling or fancy, that it is impossible to keep ourselves unspotted from the world, or even to come within sight of such a high attainment. To live in this world, and yet keep ourselves uncontaminated by its influence, pure in heart and life, seems as impossible as to be immersed in water, and yet keep dry ; or to walk a muddy road, and keep our garments clean ; or to take fire into our bosom, and not be burned. Well, if not more impossible than these, it can be done. It has been done—to some extent, at least, by help of Him who says, “ My grace is sufficient for thee.”

To be plunged overhead in water, and yet keep dry, is not impossible. From rocking boat, or sandy shore, observe yon sea-fowl poised on white wing above the deep. Catching sight of her prey, see ! she descends like a flash of light, diving into the belly of the wave ; ere long she emerges, and bearing no touch of damp on her snowy plumage, rises into the air with feathers dry as the eagle’s, that springs from the rock to soar in sunny skies. With feet webbed to swim, and broad sails to fly, and warm downs to preserve her heat, God has furnished this bird with an oil, that, coating her feathers, protects them from the touch of water. Nor is it impossible to crawl undefiled in mire. How often have I seen a creeping thing come wriggling out of the foulest mud, pure ; clean ; without a speck on its ringed and slimy form. And if God enables it, by a fluid secreted from its lubricious skin, to pass through defilement undefiled, may not the Christian say, Shall He take such care of the poor worm that we tread upon,

and not preserve from worse pollution those whom He has called to heaven, and redeemed with the blood of His beloved Son ?

“ He who His Son, most dear and loved,
Gave up for us to die,
Shall He not all things freely give
That goodness can supply ?”

Grant that contact with a sinful world is like taking fire into our bosom ;—it does not follow that we shall certainly be burned. With the troubled king, his nobles, and the eager multitude that crowd round the fiery furnace, look at these three Hebrews ! Their naked feet are on glowing coals ! they breathe the burning flame ! and yet they come forth, no hair singed on beard or eyelash, nor smell of fire upon their clothes.

We might meet this difficulty with such answer as the holy Leighton once gave to such another plea. Grieved with the unhappy state of his country, and the failure of his own well-meant attempts to reconcile his countrymen to prelacy, and stop the bloody cruelties of the time, he had retired into England to pass the clouded evening of his life in the house of a married sister. Having a family she had many domestic cares ; and cumbered by them, she came far short of his close and devout walk with God. One day, addressing her brother, who had never married, she said, “ It is easy for you to live a holy life ; it is otherwise with me ; with children and many household cares to occupy my thoughts and engross my attention, such a life as yours is to me impossible.” With one blow of his gentle hand, Leighton demolished her plea. He engaged in no argument, nor set

himself to prove her wrong ; but kindly turning to her, and quoting God's own word, he said, "Enoch walked with God, and begat sons and daughters." Like her, many deem high degrees of grace beyond their reach ; therefore they aim low, and in consequence of that their attainments are low ; for few are so fortunate as the son of Kish, who, leaving home to seek his father's asses, found a crown on the way. We expect too little ; and to those who would dismiss this subject, abandoning all efforts after a purity which they deem as impossible in this world, as to live in water, or breathe unhurt in fire, I have an answer, drawn also from the Word of God—an arrow taken from the quiver where the good Archbishop found his shaft. What saith the Lord ? He puts the case in your own form, and taking your very figures of fire and water, says, "When thou passest through the waters I will be with thee, and through the rivers they shall not overflow thee ; thou shalt walk through the fire, and not be burned, neither shall the flame kindle upon thee."

To keep themselves unspotted from the world,
God's people are *carefully to avoid its vices.*

There is much vice in the world. Thousands make no profession of religion ; having broken loose from their anchors, and drifted into practical infidelity, they have no connection with any church, and seek none. Thousands besides are to be found within the Church who are dead—dead as the bodies that rot and moulder outside its walls ! They have the form of godliness, but are strangers to its power. It requires neither an intimate nor an extensive acquaintance with society, to dis-

cover that thousands are living in open profligacy. The vices of town and country indeed thrust themselves on our notice. Though not exactly defended, they are allowed and winked at—now excused on the plea that the young must sow their wild oats, as if it was no solemn truth that “what a man soweth that also shall he reap”—and now varnished over by giving respectable names to bad things. For example, seduction is called an affair of gallantry; murder by duel, an affair of honor; drunkenness, intemperance; the debauchee who ruins his health, is a fast liver; and he who cheats another, is a sharp man of business. Licentiousness, with brazen front and painted face, openly walks our streets—pushing virtue aside, and putting modesty to the blush; while immoral and impure habits, though discreetly veiled, like an internal cancer, are destroying the health, the fortunes, the happiness, the bodies and souls of thousands. With idiot look, drunkenness reels abroad in the face of day; and events ever and anon are coming to light that show how many of both sexes, and of all ranks, are the secret slaves of this debasing vice. What falsehoods are told, and frauds largely practised in commerce, and in almost every kind of business! and are not the poor often defrauded of their wages, helpless widows and orphans of their substance, to maintain a splendid extravagance—a false position in society, to blow and keep up a bubble that sooner or later bursts? By how many is God's holy name profaned; and how many more—like the drunken king, who, in carousal with his wives and concubines, made wine-

cups of the vessels of the sanctuary—profane the Sabbath by idle recreation, or feasting, or business, wasting its sacred hours on the most common purposes !

To warn religious people against such vices may seem unnecessary. I know that they will not practise them ; yet they may fall into what they will not practise. Fall ? alas ! how have the mighty fallen ! and were all our secrets revealed, how would it be seen that many who never fell, had been on the point of falling—tottering, when God's arm pulled them back, on the very edge of the precipice. What sore battles have been fought of which the world knows nothing ! Examples of this, that “the righteous scarcely are saved ;” wounded, and bleeding, and all but overcome, their shield and helmet battered, their crown in danger and all but taken, they have come off conquerors only by help of Him who finds his opportunity in man's extremity, and saves at the very uttermost.

It is not the practice of fathers to publish the faults of their children ; they are slow to believe them ; they are much more ready to conceal than to reveal their failings. And for what end were the sins of Noah, and Jacob, and St. Peter, and David, written in the Bible, and proclaimed in the ears of the world, but to warn us ? Their moral is this, Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall. Do any, astonished and indignant at the insinuation, resent it, saying, There is no fear of me ? Ah ! the day was when these good men would have said the same, asking with horror as great as yours, Is thy servant a dog, that he

should do such a thing? Yet they did it; and, though with Noah's sons we would throw a mantle over their shame, the sound of their fall has its echo in our Saviour's words, Watch! Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation.

We are to abstain from all worldly pursuits and pleasures that are of a doubtful character.

The atmosphere is sometimes in such a peculiar state that the spectator, on coast or shore, looking abroad over the sea, cannot tell where the water ends and the sky begins; and as if some magician had raised them out of their proper element, and turned their sails into wings, the ships seem floating in mid-air. But occasionally no line of separation is more difficult to draw than that which lies between what is right and what is wrong. Whether such and such a business or amusement, pursuit or pleasure, is wrong, and one, therefore, in which no Christian should engage, is a question that, so far as the thing itself is concerned, may be difficult to answer. But it is not difficult to answer, so far as you are concerned, if you doubt whether it is right. The apostolic rule is, Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind; and unless you are so, then, "what is not of faith is sin"—sin at least to you. No man, I freely admit, has any more right to add to the duties than he has to add to the doctrines of religion; and he assumes an authority which belongs not to man, who pronounces anything to be positively sinful that is not clearly forbidden either by the letter or by the spirit of God's Word. These are the impious pretensions of the Church of Rome. Still, whatever others may feel themselves at liberty to do, if you are not satisfied in

your own mind and conscience that the thing is right, that the pursuit, or pleasure, or enjoyment, is lawful, it may be right for others, but it is wrong for you to do it. Hence the Word of God says, He who doubteth is damned ! not that he is damned in the common sense of that terrible expression ; not that he is damned to hell ; but that he is convicted, condemned of wrong-doing, in doing that which he is not sure is right.

In regard to the lawfulness of certain pursuits, pleasures, and amusements, it is impossible to lay down any fixed and general rule ; but we may confidently say, that whatever is found to unfit you for religious duties, or to interfere with the performance of them ; whatever dissipates your mind, or cools the fervor of your devotions ; whatever indisposes you to read your Bibles, or engage in prayer ; wherever the thought of a bleeding Saviour, or of a holy God, of the hour of death or of the day of judgment, falls like a cold shadow on your enjoyment ; the pleasures which you cannot thank God for, on which you cannot ask His blessing, whose recollections will haunt a dying bed, and plant sharp thorns in its uneasy pillow,—these are not for you. These eschew ; in these be not conformed to this world, but transformed in the renewing of your minds—“Touch not, taste not, handle not.” Never go where you cannot ask God to go with you ; never be found where you would not like death to find you ; never indulge in any pleasure which will not bear the morning’s reflection. Keep yourselves unspotted from the world ! nor from its spots only, but even from its suspicions. If the virtue of Cæsar’s wife, according to the

Romans, was not even to be suspected, may I not say as much for the purity of the Lamb's Bride? Remember that the character of a Christian is easily blemished; that they who wear white robes need to take care where they walk; that the smallest stain is visible on snow; that polished steel takes rust from the slightest touch of damp. Keep your garments clean. Keep your conscience tender—tender as the eye that closes its lids against an atom of dust, or as that sensitive plant which I have seen shrink and shut its leaves, not merely at the rude touch of a finger, but at the breath of the mouth. Walk holily, and humbly, and circumspectly, lest your good should be evil spoken of, and you should give occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme. Mould your life on Christ's; and, in the noble words of His apostle, "Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, if there be any praise, think on these things."

Religion does not require us *to retire from the world.*

In the strict sense of the term, the world has nothing to defile us. It is a beautiful world—furnished with delights, and full of loveliness. Its fields carpeted with flowers; its mountains wreathed with mists, or bathed in sunshine, or crowned with glistening snows; its bright skies and green woods ringing with merry music; its air loaded with the perfumes of ten thousand censers; its seas and lakes spread out like great

mirrors of living gold or silver ; its various elements teeming with happy myriads, that, gathering what God gives, are the pensioners of His bounty —the world is full of God ; and converse with nature, so far from corrupting or defiling us, has a tendency to purify our thoughts and improve the mind. It was not of this world, in the ordinary sense of the term, that our Lord spake, when, seeing Satan advance to the combat, He said, "The prince of this world cometh, and he hath nothing in me." Our earth owned not Satan, but Christ, as its Prince. It felt the pressure of His foot ; its waters sustained His form ; its midnight sky rang with the song of His nativity ; its air bore Him up as He rose to His Father ; in a golden cloud it provided the Conqueror with a chariot ; its waves and winds in their wildest uproar were obedient to His command ; at His bidding its water reddened into wine, its graves opened to give up their dead, its bread multiplied to feed His train ; and, as if the blow that struck Him had fallen heavy on its head, it trembled with horror as it received His blood. It never gave its iron to be nails for His blessed hands ; nor grew its thorns to pierce His brow. With high heaven, the earth was a mourner at Christ's death ; and as if it were never to recover the shock of that day, when they hung its King and Creator on a tree, an old legend says, that the reason why the aspen leaf is ever trembling on its stalk is because the cross was made of an aspen tree.

It is not the world, but the men of it, that are corrupt and corrupting. It is from these that religion calls us to keep ourselves unspotted.

Uncontaminated and unstained by their vices, we are to recoil from them, saying, My soul, come not thou into their secret; with them, mine honor, be not thou united. In Scripture, the world often stands for the ungodly; and the application of that term to them proves, alas! that the ungodly form the great mass of mankind. God's enemies are the majority; His people the minority; and in some places a very small minority. Hence they are called a *peculiar* people—a description altogether inappropriate, were the mass of society holy and leavened with divine principles; for in that case it would be the bad, not the good who were peculiar—distinguished from the multitude, like the man at the marriage feast who wore no wedding garment. An important, this is a serious and alarming consideration. It makes it all the more difficult to keep ourselves unspotted by prevailing ungodliness; just as it is more difficult to make way in the streets against a rush and press and crowd of people, than against a few individuals advancing in a direction opposite to our own. Here number is power; mass is power; as in the ball that goes crashing through walls of oak, or grinds granite stones to powder, and owes as much to its mass as to its momentum—to its weight as to its velocity.

Alarmed at this, and deeming it impossible, if exposed to it, to stem the flood of evil, and maintain a successful resistance against such odds and power of numbers, some have fled from the world. There are good Christians now-a-days who shut themselves up as they would in a town where the plague was raging; retreating before danger, they

keep aloof from society—mingling little, or not at all with the world. Under the same fears, though allowing themselves to be carried to greater lengths, men in old times withdrew to the solitude of deserts, rocks, and forests ; and became hermits. Content with a bed of dry leaves for their couch, a bare cave for their home, wild fruits for their food, the crystal spring for their simple drink, they renounced the society of man for that of the more innocent beasts, that they might escape the contaminations of an evil world. It were unjust not to admire the self-denying, brave devotion of these old anchorites ; yet they mistook the path of duty. While all, and especially young Christians—the raw recruits as they may be called—should carefully avoid the dangers of temptation, still, I ask, If the leaven is withdrawn from the lump, how is the meal to be leavened ? If the candle is removed, how is the house to be lighted ? If Christian men and women are to retire from the world,—pity the world ! how is it ever to be converted ? It is well to retire at times, by prayer, and meditation, and communion with God, to get our wounds healed and our strength renewed for the warfare and the work. But though our Lord, for example, did occasionally withdraw Himself to lone shores, and desert places, and mountain-tops, His common walk was among the haunts of men. Now He is at a merry marriage feast, and now in the silent house of mourning—here He dines with a pharisee, there He accepts the hospitalities of a publican—His footprints are on the sands of busy shores and the dusty streets of Bethsaida, Capernaum, and

Jerusalem. He went about continually doing good.

Followers of Jesus! seek others' good as well as your own. We are to leaven the world, not to leave it ; not to run away, but to stay. "The field is the world," said our Lord ; our ploughshare is to gleam in its furrows, and with flashing sickles we are to go in and reap it. Though He sent them **out** as sheep among wolves, to be hunted, and torn, and murdered, Jesus said to His disciples, as to us also, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. The part of a brave sailor is not to take to the boat, pull ashore, and leave the shrieking or sleeping passengers to perish ; but to stick by the ship so long as there is a hope of saving her. And the part of a Christian is not to desert his post in the world, but to stay by it—to keep the ship afloat, the world from perishing. They fall well, and are saved who fall at the post of duty. He who gave Paul the lives of all on board, has given Christ the souls of all His people ; and though the world should go down like a foundering ship, they perish not with it—sinking, it does not, whirlpool-like, suck them down into destruction. Those that Thou hast given me, says Jesus, I have kept—they shall never perish—no man shall pluck them out of my Father's hand.

Look at these two illustrations of the difference between *leaving the world*, and *remaining to leaven it*.

In a beautiful town of Switzerland, there is a large convent belonging to an order of Dominican nuns. Ill-guided, but, let us hope in charity,

seeking the religion that, pure and undefiled, keeps itself unspotted, these timid women have fled from the world to devote themselves to what is called a religious life, and become candidates for the highest honors of their Church. Who visits the scene, and—having read of such convents as Le Vive Sepolte by the Tarpeian rock, where the living interred occupy themselves by incessant mortification, fast continually, never read, direct their constant meditation to death and corruption, never change their dresses, and their under garments only twice in the year, never see their connections, nor yet hear their voices, nor even know anything about them, are not permitted to see the sacrament, but have it administered to them through a hole in the wall, through which, also, they make their confession and receive absolution—has associated such a life with severe austerities, will be agreeably disappointed. Beautiful order, neatness, and a fine feminine taste, reign within the convent walls. The attire of the inmates, who occupy themselves to such an extent with works of charity as to ward off *ennui*, is no doubt odd and funereal-like, and not calculated to gratify female vanity. Still, their appearance betokens no rigid fasts, or painful mortifications. The apartments are small, but most tastefully adorned. The walls are hung with needlework and pictures; every couch is white as the snows of the neighboring Alps; and at our visit, the summer breeze, as it whispered among the leaves of the vines, and stole in at the open window, filled the room with a sweet scent of beautiful flowers that grew on

the window-sill. It was a sunny scene, where one could dream away life, remote from the battles and turmoil of the world, but remote also from its duties ; and I could not but look on these fair devotees as deserters who, selfishly consulting their own safety, and distrusting the grace of God, had abandoned the post of duty. They were not keeping themselves unspotted from the world, but had fled from it.

Not in that, but in this other scene we meet the pure and undefiled religion which, while in the world, keeps itself unspotted. Go with me on a winter's night into one of the worst quarters of London. Threading streets that here blaze with the gas and glare of lowest drinking shops, and now dark and dismal, are the walk of prostitutes, and the haunts of robbers, we reach a large, dingy building. Ascending by a trap-stair to a spacious loft, we find ourselves in the strangest scene of human woe and wickedness you could look on. It is a Night Refuge for houseless women—for the friendless, those who, thrown out like faded flowers to be trodden on in the streets, had sunk into dark depths of loathsomeness and degradation. The hour is late, and though a few lingered by the stove, the most, glad to stretch their weary limbs, had lain down on the pallets that, spread on the floor, were ranged along the bare walls. Every head was raised, and all eyes turned on us as we entered. And what looks they had ! Here vice stared with her unblushing front. Some had the look of fiends ; treachery, brutal cruelty, falsehood, wrongs, and neglect, having turned whatever kindliness had once been

in the heart into gall and wormwood ; and now hatred both of God and man shot forth in their scowling looks. Others wore an expression of most touching sadness : one reclined with her back to the naked wall, gasping for breath, and dying of a raking cough ; while another sat upright in a corner, a living form of death. The tide of night had floated in this *wrack* for the sake of a meal, a fire, the humblest of couches, and a roof to cover heads that otherwise had lain on the cold flags, or been pillow'd on a door-step.

In the centre of this scene, just risen from her knees, beside a table where the Bible still lay open, from whose pages, accompanied by prayer, she had been reading words of hope and peace to these wretched outcasts, stood a woman—I might say an angel. Leaving father, mother, brother, sister, pure associations, and a sweet home, to breathe this foul atmosphere, and take those forlorn creatures to her arms, she had become mother, nurse, physician, comforter, saviour, guardian of those from whom all others shrank as the filth and offscourings of th earth. When Carey and his associates contemplated a mission to the heathen, he, on condition that they would raise the means at home, volunteered to go abroad, boldly saying, “If you will hold the rope, I will go down into the pit.” Never had we seen this graphic speech so nobly illustrated. I stood rebuked in the presence of this noble woman. Pure, virtuous, and delicate, what a sacrifice had she made for Christ and perishing souls ! It was one for angels to sing, and for Christ Himself to

reward with, Sister of mine, well done. More than any sight I ever saw, it reminded me of Him who left His Father's bosom, and the honors paid by angels, to become the associate, and be called the Friend of sinners, to save us by His blood, and teach us by His example how to labor for the world's good, and keep ourselves unspotted from its evil.

Riches.

"My brethren, have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with respect of persons. For if there come unto your assembly a man with a gold ring, in goodly apparel, and there come in also a poor man in vile raiment; and ye have respect to him that weareth the gay clothing, and say unto him, Sit thou here in a good place; and say to the poor, Stand thou there, or sit here under my footstool: are ye not then partial in yourselves, and are become judges of evil thoughts? Hearken, my beloved brethren, Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him?"—ST. JAMES ii. 1-5.

THE same cause produces different effects under different circumstances. Look, for example, at volcanic action. As the higher we rise in the air, though we approach the sun, it grows the colder; the deeper we descend into the bowels of the earth it grows the hotter, by something like a degree for each hundred feet; every fathom down being, in fact, six feet nearer the fire—nearer to that immense, central mass of burning matter, around which this green earth, where we build our houses and reap our harvests, lies like the shell of an egg around its contents; and which, once it burst out, will remove the doubts of sceptics, and supply fire enough for the flames of the last day. To this imprisoned power, struggling to escape, we probably owe the earthquakes that make the frame

of nature tremble, as well as those volcanic phenomena, which, though all arising from the same cause, present so many different appearances : as in Iceland, where, preceded by a noise like thunder rolling underground, a vast column of hot water is suddenly projected to a great height into the air, amid discharges like artillery and clouds of snowy vapor ; or as in one of the beautiful islands of the Pacific, where the mud of the soil is constantly boiling over the thin crust that there separates the surface of the ground from the fires below ; or, as in the lofty ranges of the Andes, where flames and smoke are ever rising from what have been called the chimneys of the world—the tops of mountains that are wrapped in a mantle of perpetual snow.

As it is with such physical forces, so it is with the passions that rage and burn in human breasts ; their expression varies with circumstances. It is affected by the period and condition of life. It is modified by the influence of the gospel and of civilization, by the customs and the laws of different countries—human passions no more than the earth's fiery contents exploding everywhere alike. The detracting word dropped of one who has injured you, the abuse bandied between two scolding women, the curse one rough and angry man hurls at another's head, the sudden blow dealt by a boy in the playground on the cheek of his companion, are ebullitions of the same passion that used to place two men on the dewy ground, amid some peaceful, rural scene, to aim their bullets at each other's hearts ; and which still, in the south of Europe, steals with noiseless foot and coward steps on an unsuspecting enemy to plant the

poignard in his bosom, and wipe the bloody steel with a grim smile of satisfied revenge.

Like revenge, the love of money, the thirst for gold, the inordinate desire for wealth, against which God's Word raises some of its most awful warnings, presents itself under a variety of aspects. Proteus-like, it assumes sometimes one form, sometimes another; but in whatever form it appears a base, soul-destroying passion, it is accursed of God; insidious as it is fatal; one on which our Lord pronounces this decisive sentence, "Ye cannot serve God and Mammon." In such a country as ours, which owes its greatness to its commerce, whose ships plough the waters of every sea, whose manufactures clothe the natives of every land, where millions rise every morning to the sound of the factory-bell, and trade is carried on to an extent, and with an energy unexampled in the history of the world, we especially need to guard against the worship of money, the inordinate desire for its possession, giving to mere wealth the honor that belongs to moral worth. For this end, let us look at the way in which an undue regard to wealth appeared, according to the apostle St. James, among the first Christians.

The church is met for worship; or rather perhaps to sit in judgment on a dispute between two contending parties, who, according to the directions of the apostles, have referred their difference to the decision of the church rather than of heathen judges. The court is constituted; the case is called; the clients enter. One is sumptuously attired; good living in his shining face, and wealth upon his back; the gold ring

that glitters on his white, soft hand bespeaking his condition ; he advances with pomp and dignity. But what is this other object that the same door admits ?—a moving heap of rags. Hunger in his haggard cheek, sorrow in his sunken eye, his whole mien and bearing betraying a crushed and broken spirit ; it is a poor man in vile raiment, with a starving wife and children perhaps at home. The law of God, in directing judges how to act in such circumstances, utters no uncertain sound. Its noble words are, “Ye shall not respect persons in judgment : ye shall hear the small as well as the great ; ye shall not be afraid of the face of man.” That in one place ; this in another : “Ye shall do no unrighteousness in judgment ; thou shalt not respect the person of the poor, nor honor the person of the mighty ; in righteousness shalt thou judge thy neighbor.” Thus spake God ; and in the case put by St. James, a right-minded judge would lean to neither side, but with steady hand hold the balance even—neither allowing pity for the poor man on the one hand, nor respect for wealth on the other ; to sway his decision, to turn the scales. These noble and divine instructions, which contrast so strikingly with the old practice of Scotland, where it used to be said, “Show me the man, and I will tell you the law,” and deserve to be written in bright letters of gold on the walls of every court, were admirably embodied in the figure which the old Egyptians gave to justice. She was symbolized by a human form without hands—to indicate that judges should accept no bribe ; and not without hands only, but sightless—to indicate that the

judge is to know neither father nor mother, nor wife nor child, nor brother nor sister, nor slave nor sovereign, nor friend nor foe, when he occupies the seat of justice. He is not to see the client, but only to hear the cause ; and, uninfluenced either by fear or favor, to decide that upon its merits.

But in the assembly of which St. James gives us a picture, the hideous form of Mammon sits enthroned above Christ and the law of God. Indicating their bias, and inflating the pride of wealth, neither, on the one hand, teaching the proud man that his lofty airs go for nothing there, and that their eyes are not to be dazzled by the flash of his ring ; nor, on the other hand, telling the poor client to hold up his head like a man, and be assured that his vile raiment will not tempt them by an unjust judgment to defile the purity of their ermine, they invite the first to a place of honor, and say to the other, Stand back ! stand there ! or if you will sit, sit on the floor under my feet !—feet, some one might whisper, that shall trample on you because you happen not to be rich, but poor. Betraying by this conduct an undue regard to wealth, let them be beacons to warn us off a shore where many have made sad and unlooked-for shipwreck. Christ was poor ; and let us not forget that poverty is the lot of many of the excellent ones of the earth ; that if it comes not through our vices, it is the cup our Father has mingled for us ; and that many of those on whom wealth looks down in haughty contempt, God has chosen to be rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which He hath promised to them that love Him.

Years ago, a trial took place in the highest judicial court of our country, which shook this kingdom to its centre, and drew on it the eyes of the world. A queen was on her trial. On that occasion, a great man, with the passions and power of the Crown arrayed against him, stood up boldly in her defence ; and, confronting royalty as a rock confronts the surging sea, flung back the threats with which they attempted to deter him from his duty, saying, with defiant air and attitude, "An advocate is to know no person on earth but his client." But a judge is not even to know the clients. He is to know nothing but the cause. It appears, however, that such judges did not preside in the court that incurred the censure of St. James : " My brethren," he says, " have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with respect of persons. For if there come unto your assembly a man with a gold ring, in goodly apparel, and there come in also a poor man in vile raiment ; and ye have respect to him that weareth the gay clothing, and say unto him, Sit thou here in a good place ; and say to the poor, Stand thou there, or sit here under my footstool ; are ye not then partial in yourselves ? " In these words the apostle charges them with having respect of persons. Nor was it, strictly speaking, respect for persons these first Christians showed ; it was something worse, meaner, baser still—it was respect merely for dress, attire, gay clothing, a gold ring. It was not moral worth that procured one of them a distinction which was denied to the other—it was but the wealth of which the raiment and the ring were tokens.

Here, then, in the very house of God, these Christians bowed the knee to Mammon ; and, like the spaniel that licks the hand that beats it, they crouched to the power that smote, persecuted, and oppressed them. How mean that was ! To what baseness will the love of money make men stoop ! The scene fires the apostle's just indignation. It bursts out in these exclamations : "Ye have despised the poor ! Do not rich men oppress you ? Do not they blaspheme that worthy name by which ye are called ?" This injustice, viler than the poor man's raiment—this cringing, crouching, creeping baseness, shows how the love of money, the inordinate regard for wealth, demeans men, demoralizes them ; and what need we, in this busy, trading commercial country, have to guard against a passion that has enslaved the sovereign on the throne ; corrupted the judge on the bench ; seduced the priest at the altar ; and which, almost more than any other passion, is so incompatible with piety, that the apostle St. John says, "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him."

This passion appears among us *in the inordinate desire after riches.*

What a scene of bustle, and hurry, and trouble, and toil we live in ! It is not for bread to eat, and raiment to put on—nature's wants are few and simple. It does not accord with the unambitious prayer of our Divine Teacher, Give us day by day our daily bread. As on the turf, where, abreast each other, with foaming bits, and panting sides, and distended nostrils, high-mettled horses strive which shall first reach the winning-post, so

is that race for riches in which we see the law of God, the cross of Christ, the interests of the soul, the well-being of the body as well as of the soul, trampled under foot by the eager competitors. Were the crown of heaven, all sparkling with the gems of redemption, hung aloft on the goal, and were there but one crown to a crowd of candidates, people could not be more earnest, eager, bent upon their object. How they run, and sweat and toil, to the whip and spur of this master-passion!—not seldom meeting the fate of the poor race-horse, that, distancing his fellows, and reaching by wide and rapid strides the goal, drops dead in the moment of triumph. How many embitter, and how many shorten their life in pursuit of a wealth they live not to enjoy—leaving people, as they carry the rich man with parade and costly pomp to his grave, to moralize on his folly, and exclaim, Vanity, vanity, all is vanity!

This desire, which is so apt to grow into an in controllable passion, has no warrant in Scripture. The Scriptures teach us to pray, and pray earnestly, to be saved, good, wise, holy, kind, lovers of God and man; but nowhere to be rich—and a man should never try to be what he cannot pray to be. Indeed, we are taught to pray, not for, but against riches. And so men pray; but how often, like one who rows a boat, do they look one way and pull another? It is not uncommon for people to say that ministers should not be rich; and some take good care, as far as they are concerned, that they shall not—muzzling the ox that treadeth out the corn. When pleading the cause of my poorer brethren, not seeking riches

for them, but only a competency, and that those that serve at the altar should live by the altar, the response I met from one who "fared sumptuously every day," was—Oh, ministers should not be rich ; it is not good for them. But was Agur's prayer intended only for the lips of ministers ? On the contrary, I believe that riches were less dangerous in their hands than in those of most other men. Brought more than others in contact with the poor and needy, they would be more likely to make a generous, and hedged round by the sacredness of their office, they would be less likely than many to make a vicious use of their wealth. At any rate, other men have as much need as the ministers of religion to pray with Agur, " Give me neither poverty nor riches."

But some say, the tide of fortune flows in on us --the money comes unprayed for, and unsought. If so, if it flows in on you, then let it flow out from you in as full a stream. Be like yonder lake, that, refusing to be surcharged with water when thunders are pealing and lightnings are flashing among the dark hills, and a thousand foaming torrents leaping down their sides, pour a flood into its bosom, ere long pours forth a corresponding flood at its exit ; and, giving to the earth as it gets from heaven, swells the river, that, rising on its banks and rushing from the glen, winds its bright and blessed way onward to the sea.

The desire for riches, while unscriptural, is, in many instances, in the highest degree irrational. Hoarding is a strange insanity. I discover divine wisdom in the hoarding habits of some animals ; in the honey the bee stores up in waxen cells, and

in the wealth of nuts the brisk and merry squirrel packs up in the hollow tree. Their supply of food is uncertain ; and, with more than suffices for present wants, God teaches them through their instincts not to waste the bounties of nature, but lay them up for a time of need. And though it seems foolish in the dog who has a kind master, and gets his regular meals, yet it rather amuses us than otherwise to see him, under the influence of instincts which domestication has dulled rather than destroyed, steal away into the garden, and, cautiously looking round to see that he is unnoticed, scrape up the soil with his paws to bury a bone for future use. This hoarding is the natural habit of the animal—the true instinct of his wild life—of value to the dog. But for a man with ample means, possessing already more than he can require or use, to hoard up wealth—clothes when the poor are naked, food when the poor are hungry, money when others have not wherewithal to buy a meal, and children, to use the touching words of Scripture, are crying for bread, and their mothers have none to give them, is, to say nothing of its inhumanity, a species of madness. *Cui bono?* What is gained by it ? Nothing. Nothing can properly be called a man's own but what he can use. There is no profit of it under the sun. God has no respect for persons ; in His eyes wealth is not worth ; and you may know how little God thinks of money by observing on what bad and contemptible characters He often bestows it. Forfeiting man's respect as well as His, the greedy, griping, grasping lose the shadow as well as the substance ; despised by the great and detested by the humble, they

live unloved, and die unmourned. Yet to that miserable end the craving for wealth brings us, unless we are kept by the grace of God. There is a witchery about money-making, as well as gambling, against which those who make it honestly, and use it well, and save only what is wise and prudent, cannot be too much on their guard. He who is saving money should look well to the saving of his soul. He is mounted on a steed which has often run away with its rider. He is sailing on the rim of a whirlpool which is apt to draw him in ; and where, though the water seems smooth as oil, and placid as a lake, he may detect this fatal tendency—ay, and catch the distant roar of its devouring vortex. He is working at a machine which, without constant care, will draw in his finger ; and after that his hand ; and then his arm ; till by and by spectators stand aghast to see his body whirled round, a bloody, mangled, lifeless mass. Make wise and prudent provision for the future ; yet let it be your daily and most earnest prayer that God would keep you from forgetting the great future of eternity, or allowing carefulness for this world to grow into carelessness of the next —into that love of money which is the ruin of so many souls, and which the word of God declares to be the “root of all evil.”

This undue regard for wealth may be seen *in the conduct of parents.*

The foremost thing with them should be the spiritual and eternal interests of their children—otherwise the authors shall prove the curse of their being. Carry them in the arms of prayer to Christ. Seek not that they may be great, but

good. Care not though their names are not in the temple of fame, if they are found in the Book of Life. Teach them to strive not so much for the honors of the school, or of their profession, as for the "honors that come from God only." Train the branches upward; guide their aspirations heavenward; point them to the skies. Let their ambition rise above an easy or prosperous life, to a useful one. Teach them to spurn the maxims of the world, and live for others—loving and loved. What though they have a humble home on earth if they have a mansion above the stars; though they are poor in this world's goods if they are rich in faith; though their road below be rough and flinty, if it conduct them to the cross of Calvary, and by that to the gate of heaven and the bosom of God.

Yet, alas! how often are children sacrificed to wealth! Crimes that were done at the altars of Moloch are repeated at the shrines of Mammon. To come down from generalities to matters of actual and every-day life, see in these, among many other things, the undue regard paid to wealth, and the gross neglect of higher interests.

Parents eagerly seek *rich marriages for their daughters.*

Wealth is weighed against worth; and in the estimation of many outweighs it. The happiness of children is cruelly sacrificed, or never consulted in these wretched money-matches. The only plain rule which Scripture lays down in regard to marriage is trodden in the dust. Not forbidding the bans where there are differences of rank, or fortune, or race, or color; the apostle says, "Be

not unequally yoked together with unbelievers." Yet see the court paid to a man who has neither brains in his head, nor generosity in his heart, nor piety in his soul, but only money in his purse—the money, not the man, the true attraction. With hand and heart cruelly divorced, many a poor girl is sacrificed at the marriage altar. She wears chains of slavery in the gold she wears! Not less than yon dark negress who, rudely handled, stands blushing, or with swimming eyes fixed on her lover, weeps on the auction-block, this fair creature is sold for gold; not by a master but by her parents; not by heathens but by Christians; and in a land, too, where the soil boasts such liberty, that the bondsman who touches it is free. Forced, perhaps, to part with the true gem of a kind, true, attached, and loving heart for these dead things, the diamonds that, flashing on her attire, blind others' eyes to the desolation within her soul, are the marks of her bondage. Compared with parents that sacrifice their children for money, a title, rank, estates, how noble the Hebrew chief! Jephthah sacrificed his daughter, but not for gold. He offered her up on the sacred altar of his country. Patriotism dictated, and piety demanded the sacrifice; he said, I have opened my mouth unto the Lord, and I cannot go back. Still, though animated by the purest motives, and sustained by the highest principles, it was in the bitterness of his heart, he stood over the gentle sufferer, meekly bending her head to the stroke, to cry, Alas, alas, my daughter! But the bitterness of that hour is not to be compared with the self-reproach and wretchedness of him who, sacrificing his child for

money, has broken her heart ; giving her to some ungodly man, has ruined her soul ; and is left to cry in unavailing regrets, Alas, alas, my daughter !

The undue regard of wealth appears *in the lucrative positions parents seek for their sons.*

How and where, in what profession, business, town, country, their children will make most money, and find the surest, shortest road to fortune, is the only consideration with many—and the chief one with some whose Christian character might have warranted us to say, “**We hope better things of you.**” In this matter how may we ask of many unquestionably devout and pious parents, **What do ye more than others?** How rare is it, for instance, to find Christians in affluent circumstances educating a son for the ministry ; like Samuel’s mother, dedicating a child to the service and house of God ! Ever and anon the churches lift up a loud and urgent cry for more volunteers to storm the breaches God’s providence is making in the walls of Heathendom, for more missionaries to carry the cross to pagan lands, for more candidates to supply the lack of service at home ; and all this, while other professions are over-stocked, and Christian parents are sending off their sons by thousands every year to seek wealth beyond the wide seas, in inhospitable climes, and on heathen shores. Why is this so ? It cannot be because the office of the ministry is not respectable. In influence and dignity, the pulpit yields to no place under the sun. Others hold their commission from the Sovereign, but the minister of the gospel holds his from the King of kings and Lord of lords ; and fills an office

of such dignity as in the eyes even of the world to impart a measure of respectability to its holder, though he may have no claim otherwise to respect. But it is not lucrative. There is the key to the mystery. It is usually a poor office ; and pity 'tis 'tis poor ! and thus, though Christ was poor, and made Himself poor to make us rich, those for whom He gave His blood, refuse Him their sons. Let Christians blush to read the story of the rude clansman who, after seeing six stalwart sons fall defending his chief, called for his seventh and last boy, his Benjamin, to fight and die with him in the noble but hopeless struggle.

In the profession of the ministry, it is true men may save souls ; but in others, they will save money. In this they may win jewels for Christ's crown, but in these they may hope to array wife and daughters in the glittering pride of jewellery. In training a son for this office, they will place him in circumstances the most favorable to virtue and piety ; still, though removed far from a father's care, and a mother's prayers, and the means of grace, in secular occupations, in lands where he hears no Sabbath-bells, or amid the temptations of great cities, where no one cares for his soul, he may make a fortune—and so money carries it over the highest and holiest considerations. The youth is launched forth on the world. The helm is in the grasp of a feeble hand. The storm of temptation comes. His father's parting prayer, his mother's last tender look, and the holy recollections of home, still fresh in his mind, he makes an effort to hold on in his virtuous career ; but by and by he gives up the unequal

struggle, and with "youth at the prow and pleasure at the helm," drives on to ruin—becomes a total wreck. What a fate for a parent to weep! What a sorrow for his life! As he recalls the image of the boy whom he sacrificed to the love of gold, how will remorse wring from his heart more than the bitterness of David's cry, O my son Absalom! my son, my son Absalom! would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!

The undue regard to wealth appears *in the desire of parents to bequeath riches to their children.*

If parents, without any respect to the spiritual, looked only to the temporal interests of their children, they would not be so anxious to leave them wealth. Few greater misfortunes could befall a youth than to be left a fortune. How would that event increase his danger; and, filling a father's heart with new fears, cast a dark shadow over the hopes he had begun to cherish of his son! The world presents temptations enough to youth without that. It needs a steady foot and a cool head to stand on the edge of a dizzy cliff; a steadier hand than most young men possess to carry a full cup. With few, or almost no exceptions, they have a roaring sea of temptations to swim through; and to how many has their wealth proved a bag of gold, which a foolish parent's hand has tied round the neck of the unhappy youth? We have watched their course, and seen their heads, after a brief struggle, go down beneath the wave; while those who had nothing but their own exertions and God's blessing to depend on, finding in that emptiness a life-buoy, have struck out manfully for the land, and stood

alive on the shore of a sea thickly strewn with the drowned bodies of others, to thank God that they had had a hard battle to fight, and the yoke to bear in their youth. Look around and see who those are that stand on the heights of their profession, or business ! With few exceptions, they are those whom riches did not tempt to be idle ; who wrought under the spur of a sharp necessity ; whose purses were lighter than their hearts ; who, receiving little else from a father but a good education and an honorable name, had no portion of goods to spend " on harlots and riotous living"—hand over hand, by their own manful exertions, they have climbed to the positions of honor, affluence, or usefulness they fill.

Now, look on the other hand to the common—not universal, but common fate of those for whom anxious parents have laid up stores of wealth ! In how many instances has it proved their ruin ; Well and truly does the Psalmist say, " He heappeth up riches and knoweth not who shall gather them." It is well he does not. He sleeps, but it might disturb him in his grave to see how recklessly squandered is all that he carefully gathered ! that the portions he left are spent with the prodigal's folly without being followed by the prodigal's repentance ; and that no inscription so describes his life and befits his tombstone, as—Vanity, vanity, and vexation of spirit ! He has enriched his children ; and ruined them. He sowed the wind, and they reap the whirlwind ; and may use in hell the words of one who, mourning the dissensions that a fortune they succeeded to had bred among

her brothers and sisters, the deplorable wrecks which it had made of youths once full of promise, exclaimed, as she wrung her hands—Oh, that wretched money ! that wretched money !

Let us not be misunderstood. It is the duty of parents to make a prudent provision for their children, and against the accidents of life. An apostle, speaking of him who provides not for those of his own house, says, that he “is worse than an infidel, and has denied the faith.” That man certainly commits a crime against his children who rears them in the habits of affluent circumstances, and leaves them beggars at his death. Such conduct, however common, is inexcusable and cruel in the upper classes. And it is unwise and wrong in the humbler, not to make honey or hay when the sun shines ; and stand prepared for days when the right hand has lost its cunning, and the brawny arm its strength, and the back that bore itself erect under the burden of life’s daily toil, bends beneath the weight of years. Only let money be kept in its own place. Its place is in your hands, not in your affections. Lodge it in the bank ; but not in your heart—keep that for God. Gold is a good servant ; but a bad, base, exacting, cruel, despotic master. Be on your guard ; if it is not your servant, you must be its slave. Well does the Bible pronounce the love of it to be “the root of all evil.” It drew Lot into Sodom, from whose fiery ruin he escaped but by the skin of his teeth. Demas was an apostle and it made him an apostate. It turned Judas into a traitor, and, loading his name with eternal infamy, sank his soul into eternal perdition. Money cannot be safely made, or safely saved, but by those who

through grace receive and use it as a gift from God ; who would not give one red drop of a Saviour's blood for all the gold of banks ; who amid all other questions of profit and loss, are most impressed and most occupied with this,—What shall it profit a man though he gain the whole world, if he lose his own soul ? What shall a man give in exchange for his soul ?

The Law of God.

"If ye fulfil the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself, ye do well: but if ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin, and are convinced of the law as transgressors. For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all. For he that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill. Now if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law. So speak ye, and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty. For he shall have judgment without mercy, that hath showed no mercy: and mercy rejoiceth against judgment."—ST. JAMES ii. 8-13.

GOD always uses such means as are best suited to the work He has on hand—carpenters, architects, mechanics, in employing various kinds of tools, but copy the great Maker and Monarch of all. Long ages ago—ten thousand, perhaps ten hundred thousand years ago, when God was preparing this world for the abode of man, working on rough materials, He employed agents of tremendous power. What fires they were that fused the solid rocks; how they roared and flamed, when—as science teaches and the Bible tells—"the hills melted like wax at the presence of the Lord!" We talk of stormy seas and mountain billows that toss our stoutest ships like feathers on the wave, and the round rattling shingle as it is swept up and down the foaming beach; but what waves were those that, surging up the valleys, broke on the tops

of our highest hills, and flinging their spray in the face of heaven, left the plains covered with immense beds of gravel, and our glens with those granite boulders, whose rounded forms speak of long ages during which they had been rolled about on the shores of tremendous seas ! Who reads the pages of the book of Nature cannot doubt that, like man, our earth had been born naked—not clothed as now with soil and verdure. And what forces of ice, iceberg, of glacier, were they that ground the surface of the rocks to dust, which, borne off by rivers, was spread out on the bottom of the ocean to form the forest lands and corn fields of future continents ! And when in the course of time these were ready to be raised, how tremendous the power that heaved up, for example, the Alps, the Andes, this island, from the bed of the sea, and gave the rocks around which fish once swam and sea monsters sported, to be the home of the eagle—for clouds to girdle and snows to crown !

These forces have disappeared. They have done their work. And now God in Nature works by other and gentler agencies—soft falling dews, summer showers, the silent light, the feathery snow, the golden clouds, the ebb and flow of tides, and seas that—turned by sails and steam into the high road of distant nations—man ploughs as safely almost as he ploughs the land—“He is wonderful in counsel and excellent in working !”

In His spiritual kingdom, in the dispensation of grace, as well as in the department of Nature, we find God also selecting instruments suited to the work He has in hand—using rough or gentle means according to the subject he has to work

upon. And in turning our attention to the law of God, I may remark that this accounts for the circumstances in which the moral law was delivered to the children of Israel at Mount Sinai.

These circumstances were of a kind to rouse the attention of the most stupid, and strike terror into the stoutest hearts. Two days of preparation have passed, since Jehovah announced His intention of descending on the mount ; and many an eye is turned on Sinai, that, with its gray head lifted calm and peaceful against the evening sky, wears no sign of the approaching event. If any asked, Where is the promise of His coming ? the third morning sealed the lips of cavillers and set all doubts at rest. A burst of thunder that shook the earth and heavens roused the sleeping camp ; and brought old and young to their tent doors to gaze with pale faces on Sinai. Wrapt to its feet in a sable mantle, it stands up a mass of solid blackness. Lightnings played around it : pierced it : and streaming from it, mingled many peals into one long, continuous, stunning roar of thunder. The mountain, as if kindled by these fires, vomited forth a smoke that, spreading a lurid cloud over the sky, darkened the face of day ; and the earth, as if infected with the terror of the people, began to tremble beneath their feet. The thunders cease —but to give place to sounds still more awful. Out from that terrible darkness, loud and long, louder and still louder, till it rung like the summons that shall wake the dead, pealed the notes of a heavenly trumpet. Next, as I read the story, the trumpet ceases ; and the people who, struck with a panic, had fled from the borders of the

mountain, and were standing afar off, heard a voice. It issued from the dark bosom of the cloud ; and audible not to hundreds, nor thousands, nor tens of thousands, but to the millions of that mighty multitude, it rang out loud and clear those ten commandments which, forming the moral law, expressed the will of God, and should ever prove the rule of man. Overwhelmed, half dead with terror, ready to exclaim with Jacob, How terrible is this place ! the people ran to Moses, crying, Speak thou with us, and we will hear ; but let not God speak with us, lest we die.

Such were the circumstances in which the ten commandments were first spoken to man ; and looking only at circumstances—in which that law appears clothed and crowned with terrors, without reflecting on the reasons for them, or considering the peculiar nature of the case, we allow ourselves to associate the law of God with His terrors, and only the Son of God with His love—as if God in the law, and God in redemption appeared in different characters. Ask a man where the love of God is to be seen, he would never dream of pointing to the table of the ten commandments. He turns his back on Sinai, and his face to Calvary, saying, There, on that bloody tree, in its blessed burden, behold the love of God ! This is a mistake ; a very great mistake ; a pestilent heresy. No doubt it is hardly possible to imagine a greater contrast than the scenes of Sinai, and those in which the Saviour of the world was born : shepherds watching their flocks on the quiet uplands of Bethlehem ; the calm night with its spark-

ling stars and soft falling dews ; the world around —the babe on its mother's breast, and children locked in each other's arms, all hushed in slumber ; the deep silence broken by no sound save the baying of a watch-dog, the tinkling of mountain streams, or the distant murmur of a waterfall ; a beautiful light far up in the deep blue sky, descending, brightening till the stars are quenched in its glory ; then a gentle voice, sounding down from above to banish the alarm of these simple shepherds, and saying, Fear not, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy—then the whole sky suddenly bursting into light, and songs of sweetest voices singing, as they sing before the throne, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will toward men.

Still, in delivering the moral law amid circumstances so different from these, the God of love was only using such means as the work required. True, they were circumstances of terror ; but they were needed. Slavery had been for centuries the cruel lot of the children of Israel ; and that—which John Wesley rightly called “the sum of all villainies”—had sunk the Hebrews, as it does every race it curses, into the lowest depths of ignorance, stupidity, brutality, mental and moral debasement. Their history is crowded with proofs of that ; they were a stiff-necked people, ever longing to return to Egypt—preferring its onions with bondage, to liberty with the bread of heaven.

In dealing with such a people God had the rudest materials to work upon. Rough work requires rough instruments : to use a figure whose appropriateness may excuse its familiarity, men

don't cut blocks with razors. It is with an axe the woodman fells the forest. It is with the strongest stimulants—in a case we knew of, pouring boiling water on his naked thighs—that the physician rouses one sunk into deadly stupor. Snow melts before the soft breath of spring ; but rocks are only split by the stroke of lightning or the blast of powder. Gold is beaten into shape without the aid of fire—not iron : more stubborn metal, it has to be thrust into the roaring forge.

A dull, gross, animal, apathetic congregation requires a rousing preacher—that he who occupies the pulpit be no Barnabas but a Boanerges, a son of thunder. Even so, God having in Israel to deal with a hard-hearted and obdurate people, adapted His instruments to the material He had to work upon: thundered out His law in their ears, and sought by these circumstances of terror to impress it on their hearts. These, however, being but the dress it wore, do not properly belong to the law ; nor are they the true exponents of the mind of the Lawgiver. There is the same love in the law as in the gospel—the difference is only in expression, as when I warn one against venturing into the roaring flood, and when, on his leaping madly in, I follow to save him. In the law Love warns, in the Cross it redeems. Both are, as I undertake to show, the true mirror of Him who thus defines His own character, “God is love”—“Fury is not in me.”

The spring of the law is love.

With its, Thou shalt not do this, and Thou shalt not do that, the law presents rather an ungracious aspect. We like all to be bidden, but

worse to be forbidden. But does Love never forbid? A mother, does she never forbid her child; but, on the contrary, indulge every caprice and grant all its wishes? How disastrous the fate and brief the life of a child denied nothing; indulged in everything—allowed to play with fire, or firearms; to devour the painted but poisonous fruit—to bathe where the tide runs like a racehorse, or the river rushes roaring into the black swirling pool. And who frets against the restraints of God's holy law because it forbids this and the other thing, is no wiser than the infant who weeps, and screams, and struggles, and perhaps beats the kind bosom that nurses it, because its mother has snatched a knife from its foolish hands.

No doubt the law restrains us; but all chains are not fetters, nor are all walls the gloomy precincts of a jail. It is a blessed chain by which the ship, now buried in the trough, and now rising on the top of the sea, rides at anchor and outlives the storm. The condemned would give worlds to break his chain, but the sailor trembles lest his should snap; and when the gray morning breaks on the wild lee-shore, all strewn with wrecks and corpses, he blesses God for the good iron that stood the strain. The pale captive eyes his high prison wall, to curse the man that built it, and envy the little bird that, perched upon its summit, sings merrily, and flies away on wings of freedom; but were you travelling some Alpine pass where the narrow road, cut out of the face of the rock, hung over a frightful gorge, it is with other eyes you would look on the wall that restrains your restive steed from backing into the gulf below.

Such are the restraints God's law imposes—no other. It is a fence from evil—nothing else. I challenge the world to put its finger on any one of these ten commandments which is not meant, and calculated to keep us from harming ourselves, or hurting others. There is the same love in the law that there is in the gospel ; and between them a harmony as perfect as the music of that heaven where the harps are gold, and the strings are touched by angels' fingers. The hand, indeed, that wrote these commandments is the same that was nailed to the cross ; and amid Sinai's loudest thunders Faith recognizes, though it speaks in other tones, the voice which prayed for mercy on murderers, and promised paradise to a dying thief.

The spirit of the law is love.

By her subtle arts chemistry extracts from the crude and bulky substance its spirit, essence, essential element : offering us in a small phial of the costly attar the fragrance of a whole field of roses, and in a few drops drawn from the poppy juice, that potent element which dulls the sense of pain, and charms suffering to sleep. But no odor distilled from the blushing rose smells so sweet, no spirit drawn from the gaudy poppy soothes the smart of pain, as the spirit of love which Jesus finds in a law that so many regard with dread—fears groundless as those that saw in Himself a spectre of the deep, and which He laid, as His voice on another night did the waves, with *It is I, be not afraid.* With such reassuring, comforting words, God, as a God of love, comes to us in this dreaded Law. Jesus takes these ten commandments into His hands, analyzes them, extracts their true es-

sence and spirit—and what is it? It is love—love toward God, and love toward man. Whoever doubts it, let them listen to His answer, when a lawyer, tempting Him, came and said, Master, which is the great commandment? Jesus said unto him, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind; this"—not, thou shalt have no other gods before me; nor, thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image; nor, thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain; nor, thou shalt not kill, or steal, or commit adultery—"this is the first and great commandment; and the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself—and on these," He adds, "hang all the law and the prophets."

Take, for example, the second table of the law, those six commandments which respect our conduct not to God, but to our fellow-men. Do not these enjoin the very things which Love would prompt to; and teach us to carry into practice the golden rule, as it is called, that grandest maxim which ever fell on human ear, Do unto others as ye would have others do unto you? Who that loves his neighbor as he loves himself would steal from him, would kill him, seduce his wife, or swear away his fair name, his liberty, or life? Does not the loveliness and divine excellence of the law appear in this, that no man, however much he might wish to have liberty to break it for his own pleasure against others, would wish that any should have license to break it against himself? What villain coolly laying, devil-like, his snares to seduce another's wife, or sister, or daughter, would

consent that others should have license to seduce his own ? Even thieves insist on honesty between each other. Traitors consign to death the man who turns traitor on themselves. Thus the worst of men pay homage to the law—it is sacrificed to their passions, but like the victims of old that were led to the altar crowned with garlands of flowers.

With their bad passions raging against it as the sea foams and rages against the shore that confines its waves within their bounds, men, like the fool who hath said in his heart, There is no God, have sometimes wished there were no law ; and that every one was left, as in Israel when there was no king, to do what was right in his own eyes. No law ! That wish were hardly granted when it would happen with them as with the man of heathen fable, who had sought and received from Jupiter the power of turning all he touched to gold. And when the bread he hungered for changed in his hand to gold, and the water he raised to his thirsty lips turned at their touch to gold, and the downy pillow on which he laid a weary head stiffened into a solid, unyielding, uneasy mass of gold, he besought the god to resume the grant, and relieve him of this fatal gift. Fancy what a world this would be, set loose from the restraints of God's holy law—no written, no inner law—no conscience—no ten commandments—the reins flung loose on the neck of passion—all men and women left to obey every impulse of appetite, and do what was right in their own eyes ! What a Sodom, Gomorrah, hell ! Remove these restraints, and iniquity in such deluge as would pour on a neighboring land were

its sea-dikes thrown down, would drown the earth and destroy men from off its face.

On one occasion the barons of England addressed their king, saying, We do not wish the laws of England changed ; and we have only to fancy what a dreadful world this would become, without the restraining influence of these laws of God, to say, We do not wish one of them changed ! Not prisons and police, not the baton of the constable or the bayonet of the soldier ; but these are the bond of society ; the shield of virtue ; the protection of innocence ; the strength of weakness ; the guardian of public morals and domestic peace. And nothing but the base bad passions that spring from our corrupt nature, hinders any from saying with David, Oh how love I thy law, O Lord : it is my meditation all the day—teach me thy statutes —the law of thy mouth is better to me than thousands of gold and silver—therefore I love thy commandments above gold, yea, above fine gold : and esteem all thy precepts concerning all things to be right.

The sacredness of this law.

The apostle St. James says, "Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, is guilty of all." This seems hard measure—to make a man offender for a word—to treat him for breaking one commandment as one that had broken all the ten. It looks at first sight as if the unprofitable servant who hid his master's talent in a napkin, had some reason for speaking of him as an "austere" man. How do we justify that? We might leave God to justify Himself. We might ask, Shall not the Judge of all the earth be right?

And leaving this, with many other mysteries, to be solved at the last day, or in that world where, with eyes purified from the mists of sin, we shall see as we are seen, and know as we are known, we might answer with St. Paul, "Who art thou, O man, that repliest against God? Shall the thing made say to him who made it, Why hast thou made me thus?" But the case is not without a parallel in our own judicial proceedings—and as done in our courts of law who thinks the practice wrong? A witness, for instance, sworn by Almighty God to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, is giving evidence in a case where a man is on trial for his life. He states many, as lawyers say, *damning* facts, and makes out a case against the accused clear as daylight. What need of further witnesses? The jury lay down their pens, the judge throws himself back in his seat, and the spectators, turning to the poor, pale wretch at the bar, look on him as a dead man, feeling as sure that he will be hanged as that the sun shall rise to-morrow. And yet he is not hanged—the tables are turned in an instant; and like one in battle from whose head the sword has shorn his nodding plume, the man escapes—escapes, as the Bible says, by the skin of his teeth. The witness whose evidence had brought him to the scaffold, and to the very brink of ruin, tells a lie; one clear, deliberate falsehood. It may be on a very small point; it does not matter. All his other evidence may be true as the gospel—it does not matter; that one lie nullifies all his other testimony—blotting it clean out—reducing it to nothing. Convicted of perjury on one point, his

evidence is dealt with as if he had been guilty of perjury in all ; and that for this good reason—that one capable of swearing to a single lie, is capable of swearing to twenty. Even so—though you may start at the bold assertion, and when you think of some gross and horrid sins may be ready to exclaim, Is thy servant a dog that he should do such a thing ?—the man who is capable of breaking one of God's commandments, is capable of breaking them all ; in mind and spirit, he that offendeth in one point is guilty of all.

There are degrees, no doubt, of guilt as there are degrees of glory ; there is a descending as well as an ascending scale ; there are higher places in heaven, and hotter places in hell. It shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for Jerusalem sinners : and more tolerable for Jerusalem sinners than for the sinners of our land and cities,—for us if we reject or even neglect the great salvation. Still there is no degree of guilt but is fatal ; sin is a poison of which the smallest drop kills ; the law is so sacred that one offence, one breach of any of its commandments, exposes us to the wrath of God as certainly as a thousand. The case finds its apt illustration in yonder arch which spans the waters that reflect its bending beautiful form—drive out not ten stones, but one, and the whole pile tumbles into a mass of ruins. Or to vary the figure, a woman's virtue is as certainly lost by one fall as by twenty ; and he is as certainly a thief who steals a penny as he who steals a pound—who filches but a farthing from a ragged beggar, as he who plunders a bank of its gold, or robs a king of his

crown. "He who offendeth in one point is guilty of all."

Tried in this balance, who is not wanting ? Tried by this test, who can stand the ordeal ? Well is it said, "If thou shouldst mark iniquity, O Lord, who shall stand ?" You have not been great sinners ! What of that ?—he who offendeth in one point is guilty of all. I admit that there are unconverted people "lovely in their lives," in temper amiable, very likeable, kind-hearted, generous, just in their dealings, honest to a farthing, and in their friendships true as steel ; such that, were Christ to walk this world now as He did eighteen hundred years ago, He would love them as He loved the young ruler who came, and, falling at His feet, cried, Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life ? Suppose you were such,—and that is not supposing little,—what of that ? What man or woman can hold up their hands to say, These hands are clean ; uncover their bosom, lay bare the secrets of their hearts, to say, My heart is pure—then, alas ! he that offendeth in one point is guilty of all—One, but one sin ! Ah ! that is the dead fly in the apothecary's ointment ; there stands the spot of leprosy on beauty's brow. There are none, not the loveliest of human characters, but have sinned ; and he who offendeth in one point is guilty of all. This bolts the door of heaven against all self-righteous hopes. Looking down on others, shrinking from the society of the openly licentious, the ungodly or profane, and saying, as we push our way on, to this and that one, Stand aside, I am holier than thou, we may march bravely up to the gate. But to our plea, I have not been a great sinner, or

I have not sinned like others, or I have been honest, and sober, and virtuous, correct in my deportment, and constant in my attendance on religious ordinances, there follows no drawing of bar and bolt—but only through the unopened door this stern reply, these words of doom, He that offendeth in one point is guilty of all.

Terrible, yet blessed words! Like the muttering of distant thunder, they warn us to haste to the refuge opened in the gospel. Like a friendly notice, they warn us in letters which he who runneth may read, No road to heaven this way. They shut us up to Christ. No misfortune that! In Him we have all fulness of mercy to pardon, and grace to help; and as men who, when they have done their utmost to stop the leak, and keep the ship afloat, find her settling down in the deep, in that terrible hour, with death staring them in the face, thank God for the life-boat that, pulled by strong hands, bears down on the sinking wreck, so we thank God for Christ; we hail the Saviour of the lost. He has hastened to our relief—He is at our side—He invites us to His arms—for in Him, though the law condemns, “mercy rejoiceth against judgment.”

The gospel brings *salvation to the law-breaker*.

Mercy does not rejoice against the justice of God. The claims of Justice were not ignored or repudiated; but satisfied. Jesus bore our punishment, dying, the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God;—and the gospel that saves does not present the sword of Justice broken, but, though red with blood, wreathed with roses. Nor does Mercy rejoice against the law of God

—Christ tells us that He came not to destroy the law and prophets, but to fulfil them ;—and when the Son of God, leaving His Father's bosom, became a man to obey the precepts of the law, and pay the penalty due by us for breaking them, He crowned the law with higher honors than it had worn though Adam had never fallen, and Eden had ne'er been lost. It was great honor done to the law when God wrote it with His own finger on tables of stone ; but it receives a higher honor when, dipping His finger in the blood of Christ, He writes it on the fleshly tablets of a living, loving heart. There have been great sermons preached and printed on the ten commandments, but the Cross is the greatest sermon that was ever preached on the law ; and as we have seen a lofty mountain best, not from the plain, but from the top of another, it is on the summit of Calvary that you command the grandest views of Sinai.

It is against not God's law or justice, but the devil and death, the grave and hell, that Mercy rejoiceth. Rejoiceth ! grand, wonderful word, it lays open the very heart of God. Father of the prodigal, kind, loving, joyful man, running to meet thy trembling son, folding the poor wretch in thy fond embraces, lavishing tears and kisses on his haggard cheek, bestowing forgiveness before confession, and with answers anticipating prayer, thou wert but a dim, imperfect image of our Father which is in heaven. It is not only that God "has no pleasure in the death of the wicked." What father has ? The more wicked the son, the calamity is the greater ; the deeper goes the knife into a bleeding heart, as that greatest, blackest

grief gushes forth in a cry like this, O my son Absalom ! my son, my son Absalom ; would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son ! Nor is it only that God is "not willing that any should perish." He is God and not man ; and even we are not. I have seen the life-buoy spun out to a drowning man, and, amid the crowd on the pier that gazed in horror, there was none, as they watched its course over the roaring waves, but wished in his heart that it might reach its mark. Nor is it only that God is "willing that all should come to Him, and live." What mother but would open her door who heard the knocking, and recognized the well-known voice of some poor, fallen child, that had sunk down there amid the winter drift, and cried, with failing breath, O mother, mother dear, open and let me in. And who thinks so ill of God as to believe that when He hears such a cry at the door of mercy, He will not rise to let us and to welcome us in ! More than all that, God *rejoiceth* to save, and receive back to His bosom the worst and unworthiest of His erring children—of those who, like lost sheep, have gone astray. Mercy *rejoiceth* against judgment. It is a blessed thing to fill a mother's heart with joy, and pour a tide of gladness into the bosom on which we hung—so deeply loved and tenderly cared for in helpless infancy. And be he poor or rich, prince or peasant, I honor the man who would do, dare, suffer anything to gild the evening of a father's life, and smooth the thorns of his dying pillow. It is a grand thing to make glad a parent's heart. But here we may do a thing grander still. Turn

to the call of mercy, and you fill the great heart of God with joy, and angels' harps with praise. It may be that you do not love Jesus. Well, Jesus loves you ; and pities you. You spit on Him, despise His love, repel His approaches ? Well, His blessed hand arrests the gleaming axe, as He turns to His Father to say, "Father, forgive them ; they know not what they do !"

Thus mercy rejoiceth against judgment. And let none stand back as if their sins were too great to be forgiven, or their case too bad to be cured. Jesus is an Advocate who never lost a cause—a Physician who never lost a patient—His blood cleanseth from all sin, and through Him the door of heaven stands open to publicans, harlots, the chief of sinners. Let all come ! See there Mercy, sweet Mercy, wearing a form of celestial beauty, with a blood-bought pardon in this hand, and a sparkling crown in that, stands aloft on the summit of the Cross, ringing forth this old cry, "Sing, O daughter of Zion ; be glad and rejoice, O daughter of Jerusalem.—The Lord hath taken away thy judgment ; he hath cast out thine enemy.—Fear not, and let not thine hands be slack. The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty ; he will save."—Save? save is almost a cold and feeble word. More, much more than save ; "as a bridegroom rejoiceth over his bride, so will thy God rejoice over thee."

Faith and Works.

"What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him? If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, and one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit? Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone. Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: show me thy faith without thy works, and I will show thee my faith by my works. Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well, the devils also believe, and tremble. But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead? Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect? And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God. Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only. Likewise also was not Rahab the harlot justified by works, when she had received the messengers, and had sent them out another way? For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also." -ST. JAMES ii. 14-26.

THERE is no analogy between mind and matter more remarkable than the reaction to which both are liable. Set free the pendulum which you have drawn to one side, and, obeying the law of gravitation, it returns to its centre; but in doing so, swings over to the other side. Or, twist a cord that has a weight attached to it; and set loose, whirling rapidly on its axis, it untwines itself; but does more, taking many a turn in the opposite

direction. Or, follow the billow that, driven by the tempest and swelling as it advances, flings itself on the iron shore ; it bursts, thundering, into snowy foam ; but does more—like men from a desperate charge, it rolls back violently into the sea. Even so on a change of opinions and manners, how prone are men to pass from one to the opposite extreme, borne by the recoil beyond the line of truth—a danger this against which reformers, whether of states or churches, of public morals or private manners, need to be on their guard.

Thus we account for the extraordinary judgment that such a man as Martin Luther, that champion of the faith, pronounced on the book of St. James. He denied its inspiration ; and not content with robbing this book of divine authority, he scrupled not to speak of it in contemptuous terms—calling it a *chaffy epistle*. It is easy to account for his saying that, when he believed it. He was a man of dauntless courage. Remaining at Wirtemberg when all others had fled, he faced the plague, saying, It is my post ; should brother Martin fail, yet the world will not fail. When Melanchthon, and every friend he had on earth, urged him not to go to Augsburg, to be given up to the machinations of the legate. They have already, he replied, torn my honor and my reputation, let them have my body if it is the will of God—my soul they shall not take. Entreated on his approach to Worms not to enter a town where his death was decided on, he pushed forwards, saying, Tell your master, that if there were as many devils at Worms as tiles on its

roofs, I would enter. And there, before the world's great Emperor, face to face with a host of princely and priestly enemies, he stood a lion at bay, and to the reiterated question, Whether he would retract, with a sword suspended over him, and a grave yawning at his feet, replied, I will retract nothing ; here I take my stand ; I cannot do otherwise. So help me God. Amen. This was a man to speak whatever he believed !

Nor is it difficult to account for Luther's error. One day while climbing a stair at Rome on his knees, in hope of thus climbing to heaven, of meriting salvation through such pains and penances, the Spirit of God flashed this great truth into his mind, with the effulgence and force of lightning, "The just shall live by faith." He rose a new man ; a second St. Paul ; his mission henceforth on earth, to preach life by faith—the glorious doctrine of justification by faith without works, through the blood and merits of Jesus Christ. Well, look now at his position. There, hoar with age, strong in the personal interests of her priests and the profound prejudices of her people, resting on salvation by works, ceremonies, pay, and penance, stood the old walls of Rome ; and on their ramparts the cowled Dominican, selling indulgences, and boasting—(I quote his very words)—"I would not exchange my privilege against those that St. Peter has in heaven, for I have saved more souls by my indulgences than he by his sermons. Whatever crime one may have committed, let him pay well, and he will receive pardon." All that he said, and something about the Virgin more shocking—too shocking for your

ears. This profanity, this daring blasphemy, and that whole Romish system which substitutes the crucifix for the Crucified, and for His merits man's wretched works of penance and pilgrimages, sack-cloth for the skin, and fish on Friday, these produced on Luther's impulsive mind such a tremendous recoil, that in the rebound from error he passed the line of sober truth. Fancying something in the Epistle of St. James to be at variance with the doctrine of justification by faith, as set forth in the writings of St. Paul, he rejected it; rashly rejected it—scared by a phantom, the mere appearance of discrepancy. And doing so, he has furnished the Church of God with another illustration of the words, “Put not your trust in princes,”—nor in Luther, nor Calvin, nor in Cranmer, nor Knox—“nor in the son of man, in whom there is no help.”

Between the sentiments of these two apostles there is no real discrepancy. Before St. James had written his Epistle, the doctrine of justification by faith without works had been abused, and turned to the vilest purposes. “Wresting,” to use St. Peter’s language, the words of St. Paul from their true meaning, some made them a cover for the grossest sensuality, holding this immoral, horrible doctrine, that men could be saved by mere knowledge of the truth, mere intellectual assent to sound doctrines—miscalled faith, though they were impious in heart, and in practice impure. It was against this pestilent heresy, this poisonous weed, that, native to every soil, has sprung up in all ages, and against those who confessed Christ in words, but in works denied Him, that St. James

took pen in hand, saying, What doth it profit, my brethren, that a man say he hath faith and have not works? Can faith—this faith, such a faith—save him? Faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone.

We are *saved by faith in the merits of Jesus Christ.*

Can faith save? Certainly; if it be not that false and spurious thing which St. James pronounces dead; but true faith. Sooner than believe otherwise, even on the authority of an epistle attributed to St. James, I would believe with Luther that the apostle's name was a forgery; and that the epistle which bore it, and was bound up with the Bible, had, like Satan among the sons of God, or bad money among the current coin, got into company better than its own.

And how are we saved by faith? Not by any merit in our faith, for that is the gift of God and the work of His Holy Spirit; and is, so to speak, but the rope which the drowning man clutches, and by which another pulls him living to the shore. God its author, the heart its seat, good works its fruit, Christ is its object; and it saves by bringing us to the Saviour. It weeps with the Magdalene at His feet; it prays with the thief, Lord remember me; with the blind it gropes for Christ, crying, Thou Son of David, have mercy on us! and with Simon, as he sank amid the roaring billows, seeing help in none else, it stretches out its arms to Jesus, with Lord save me, I perish! Greatest act of the soul, it lays my sins on Jesus, and so relieves my conscience of a load of guilt; and taking off my rags to

put Christ's righteousness on me, it covers a poor sinner with a robe fairer than angels wear.

May any be thus saved ; without works ; without merit ; guilty as he who said, I believe that I have committed every sin possible to man unless murder ? Ay, and with murder to boot. It is the glory of Christ's blood that it cleanseth from all sin, and was poured out freely for the chief of sinners ; so that if any man, troubled for his sins, in terror of divine wrath, afraid to die, afraid even to go to sleep lest he should awake in hell, is crying, Oh, sirs, what shall I do to be saved ? I say with St. Paul, when the jailer, at midnight, on his knees, was putting the same question, " Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." I know no other way. There is none. There is no name given under heaven whereby we can be saved but the name of Jesus : and united to Him, though by the weakest, slenderest faith, you are safe.

Christ drew divine lessons from gay flowers and singing birds. And in the conservatory I have seen a plant from which such saints as Bunyan's Mr. Feeble-mind might draw strength ; gather something more fragrant than its odors, more beautiful than its purple flowers. Climbing the trellis, which it interwove with spreading verdure and flowery beauty, it sprang from the soil by a mere filament of a stem. Unlike the mountain pine and sturdy oak, that seem built for the heads they carry, and the storms they have to encounter, one had to trace it upwards and downwards to be convinced that this thread of a stalk was the living, nourishing, sustaining channel be-

tween these flowering branches and the hidden root. How like that seemed in its feebleness to the faith of some ! But there the likeness ceased. Roughly handled, that fragile stem was broken ; and, severed from their root, branches and flowers all withered away ; but thanks be to God that, united to Christ, even by the feeblest faith, we can affirm that, Neither death nor life, nor things present nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Good works are the certain fruit of this saving faith.

One of the greatest marshals of France had for his opponent in a civil war the Prince of Condé. In him Turenne found a foeman worthy of his steel—the only man indeed who could rival him in military genius, moving troops, the arrangement and fighting of battles, sudden surprises and successful attacks. One night, when the prince was supposed to be many leagues away, Turenne lay sleeping securely in his camp. He was suddenly roused to hear in cries and shouts, the roar of musketry and cannon, the signs of a midnight assault. Hasting from his tent, he cast his eye around him ; and at once discovering, by the glare of burning houses, the roar of the fight, the skill with which the attack had been evidently planned, and the energy with which it was being executed, the genius of his rival, he turned to his staff, and said, Condé is come ! Now, in some cases especially of sudden conversion, the advent of faith may be as certainly pronounced upon. The peace of

death is broken, conscience awakes, sin appears exceeding sinful, empty forms no longer yield any comfort, carelessness about divine things gives place to all absorbing and intense anxieties, Death seems crowned with terrors, Sinai clothed with thunders, and exclaiming, What shall I do to be saved, the trembling soul hies to the Cross, clasps it, clings to it, to cry, Lord, save, I perish : in such circumstances you can safely say conversion is come, salvation come, Christ come ; and there is no presumption then in using, as we fall at Jesus' feet, the language of him who said, Lord, I believe ; help thou mine unbelief !

But though thus saved through faith, and not of works, as St. Paul says, lest any man should boast, St. Paul is not less explicit about works ; on that subject his trumpet has an equally certain sound ; for in the very same passage he tells us that believers, they that have a true saving faith, are not only cleansed through Christ from guilt, but are created in Christ unto good works, which God, he adds, "hath foreordained that we should walk in them"—that these in fact are, in all cases, as surely as divine foreordination can make them, the fruit of living faith. How should it be otherwise ? Is not faith in every other condition of its existence full of works ; the world's great worker ? Look abroad ! In yonder husbandman who, though snow lies on hill-tops and frost bites in the air, and nights are long and days are short, and woods are bare, and birds are mute, believing that spring will come, summer come, and autumn come, gives his labor to the naked fields, Faith ploughs the soil. And in yon sailor, who though

he sees the land sink beneath the wave, boldly pushes out on the pathless deep, and trusts not to sight, for he sees only a wide waste of water where other keels have left no furrow, but to his charts and trembling needle. Faith ploughs the sea. And there where men, inspired with confidence in their comrades' bravery and commander's skill, march to their positions on the battle-field as on parade, stand up facing the deadly hail, or, crouching like lions to the spring, wait the word to rise and charge, Faith fights and wins. Not cannon, nor bayonets, but mainly Wellington's faith in his men, and his men's faith in Wellington, won Waterloo; and who takes time to follow out the thought will find that faith in God's providence, in what are called the laws of Nature, in the fidelity of husbands and wives, in the affection of children and parents, in the justice of masters and honesty of servants, in men's integrity where they buy and sell, exchange or manufacture goods, in every mill and market, in every harbor and counting-room, is the working power of the world—the mighty wheel that most turns its machinery.

Well, if faith is so productive of works outside the region of religion, how much more within it? If faith in man so works, how much more faith in God? Such faith as naturally produces what are called good works, as vines produce grapes, or sorrow tears, or joy smiles; as the soil beneath us yields fruits and flowers, or the skies above us showers and sunshine. In the character of God, in the person, love, and work of His Son, in an eternal world, in the Bible, its gracious promises

and its glorious prospects, it has to do with the grandest truths ; and for a man whose heart is not devout, nor his life holy, to say that he has that faith, is to deceive himself—and furnish an awful illustration of the saying, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." Let no man deceive you. Not I, but God says, "No whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of God."

Therefore the hopes of salvation that rest on a faith without works are false, and being false, are fatal.

Last century, faith was out of fashion ; the peculiar doctrines of the gospel were ignored, unless it might be at a communion time. "Christ and Him crucified" were thrust out of sight ; unless in the form of some old mouldering stone, which the hammer of Reformers had missed, the cross was removed from the Church ; children learned to repeat the creed, but the boasted creed of many was that sung by Pope :

"For modes of faith let graceless bigots fight,
His can't be wrong whose life ■ in the right."

Virtue and vice, the beauty of the one and the deformities of the other, were the favorite topics of the pulpit. Yet the people had so little taste, that they did not appear to fall in love with virtue ; nor were even some of those much smitten by her charms to whom she sat for her portrait. Men drank deep last century ; swore profanely ; talked obscenely ; and indulged in a very loose morality. Strange to say, good works were never so much

preached, and so little practised. The more they were found in Sabbath sermons, the less they appeared in every-day life. Yet not strange ! "Thou bleeding Love," as Young sings—

"The grand morality is love of Thee,"

and Jesus, His love, His life, His death, excluded from pulpits, there was nothing to produce good works ; no pith in preaching ; no seed to yield & harvest ; no straw to make bricks ; no solid backbone, so to speak, to support the soft parts, and keep the frame erect. And the attempt at home to have a morality without religion proved as signal a failure as that abroad, in France, to have a nation without a God.

Morality without religion is a dream ; but not less a dream, and wild a dream, is religion without morality—a faith that lies in an orthodox creed without a godly and honest life—that lies in the cold assent of the understanding to truths that never touch the heart or affect the conduct. This wont stand the day which shall try the tree by its fruits, and by Christ's own lips pronounce perdition on the workers of iniquity. We want a religion that walks in the path of the ten commandments—saying, Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners. We want a religion that, not dressed for Sundays and walking on stilts, descends into common and every-day life ; is friendly, not selfish ; courteous, not boorish ; generous, not niggard ; sanctified, not sour ; that loves justice more than gain ; and fears God more than man ; to quote another's words—"a religion that keeps

husbands from being spiteful, or wives fretful ; that keeps mothers patient, and children pleasant ; that bears heavily not only on ‘the exceeding sinfulness of sin,’ but on the exceeding rascality of lying and stealing ; that banishes small measures from counters, sand from sugar, and water from milk-cans”—the faith, in short, whose root is Christ, and whose fruit is works.

Any other St. James pronounces dead—not like a dead stone which in flashing diamond, or sculptured marble, may be beautiful—but dead like a lifeless body ; putrid, horrible, in decay. Not more loathsome to me the fetid corpse where no trace of beauty lingers, than to a holy God the man who holds good doctrines, but lives a bad life ; who unites a low practice to a high profession ; who, in words, exalts the Saviour’s Cross, but in works—in crucifying His flesh, in living for others, in acts of self-denial, wont take up his own. Like some of old, does he say, I am for St. Paul, not for St. James ? St. Paul is not for him. I can fancy that apostle, in horror, rending the garment he wears in heaven ; repudiating the connection. One in glory before the throne, he and St. James are one in sentiment in this Bible. St. Paul, indeed, counted all things loss for Christ. He held the Cross aloft ; and, shaking that banner from its folds in the face of friend and foe, he waved it over the scaffold where his testimony was sealed with his blood. But the faith he preached was a faith that worketh—worketh by love ; crucifieth the flesh ; purifieth the heart ; and overcometh the world. Mark his last words to the Christians of a city in whose dungeons he had sung Christ’s praises, and whose jailer he had

conducted to Christ's feet. "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report, if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things."

Believers are called by Christ's word *to be workers*.

There are times—and such are ours—when, the inspiration of God's Word, the propitiation of the Cross, the necessity of conversion being denied, sound men are called to close their ranks, and contend together for the faith once delivered to the saints. The Captain of our salvation now seems to address His Church, as a commander the hollow square that with its front rank on the knee presenting a hedge of bayonets, and the second on their feet, with eyes glaring along the deadly barrel, is formed to receive cavalry. Their swords flashing in the sun, thundering on they come, with the impetus of a tremendous shock. The moment, how critical! Let courage fail, the line waver, offer an opening, and in sweeps the foe like a whirlwind of steel. It is the moment for their commanding officer, as he runs his eye along the grim and stern faces, and ere he gives the word that, in a burst of musketry, empties many saddles, and rolls back that array like a broken, bloody wave, to cry, Be steadfast, immovable! In regard to matters of doctrine, attacked in our day from strange quarters, so Christ speaks to us now; but He adds as when He first spake these words by the mouth of St. Paul, always abounding in the work of the Lord."

Yes! Believers are now and then to be warriors; but always to be workers.

Indeed, an idle Christian is a contradiction in terms; as much so as a drunken, lying, or adulterous Christian. For is not the Church a body, that has Christ for its Head, and His people for its members? But did God ever make a body which He encumbered with idle members? Never. What part, what member of this frame, moulded of clay, yet so fearfully and wonderfully made, does not work, was not made for working? The eye is formed to see; the ear to hear; the tongue to speak; the feet to walk; the hands to grasp; the lungs to breathe; the brain to think; the busy heart—the first to live and the last to die, a clock that needs no winding—to beat—and beating, send its blood through all the throbbing arteries. Let all, or even some of these members cease to work, I die instantly. Let any work irregularly, my health suffers; the whole body, where each member has sympathy with another, suffers. Every member works. And the harbor, with its forest of tall masts, the city, with the grinding noises, and rolling carriages, and hurry of crowded streets, present no scene of activity so wonderful as that which, covered and concealed by our untransparent skin, is going on within us—innumerable organs all at work—working the livelong day—the night that stills the hum of streets, and throws the world's machinery out of gear, bringing no pause to them.

Although in communion with this or that other Church, a member of an Episcopalian, or Presbyterian or Independent Church, who is not a working Christian, is no member of Christ's Church.

Let those who are, work—do all the good, to all the persons, at all the times, in all the ways they can—abounding in good works. Every day they live, the busier—the shorter the time, the busier—the nearer the grave, the busier ; as a stone, descending the hill, rolls with increasing speed, till, taking its last bound, it plunges into the lake, and sinks into its placid bosom.

So may the grave, with its “rest for the weary,” close above our heads ; and, as heaven opens to receive our spirits to the repose of the just, may Jesus meet us at the gate, with His “Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.”

Believers are called by Christ’s example *to be workers.*

It is common to speak, by way of distinction, of the *working-classes*. And men of lofty social position, and loftier minds—for, after all, there is nothing great about man but mind—when they stand on the platform of a popular assembly addressing the sons of toil, to win their ears and hearts, will sometimes, referring to the labors and brain-work of office, rank themselves among the working-class. But whatever be their sex, sphere, or talents, all true followers of Jesus are of the *working-class*. They were otherwise no followers of Him who is not our Propitiation only, but also our Pattern ; who is not our Propitiation unless He is also our Pattern ; and whose life, begun in Bethlehem, and closed in Calvary, was spent in “doing good.”

Bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh, true man as well as God, He drank of our cup—enjoying as

much, and more than we, the pleasures of friendship, the loveliness of nature, the feast kindness spread the happy faces of a marriage scene, seasons of welcome rest amid mountain solitudes, by Galilee's smiling lake, in the sweet society of Bethany. But was it for these He lived? for enjoyment, or for employment? for others, or Himself? Himself! He denied Himself; forgot Himself; barely allowed Himself the rest that nature needed. His heart felt, and His eye wept, and His hand was ready for all human wretchedness. Who so patient with the bad--so gentle to the erring--so tender to the penitent? Who sought His help in vain? What poor beggar unpitied, or poor sinner unpardoned, ever left His door? What blessings fell from the hands, on what errands of mercy went the sacred feet, they nailed, O Calvary, to thy cruel, accursed tree!

In the charity that covereth a multitude of sins, that hopeth and believeth all things, I can believe much. I believe that God will have mercy on the chief of sinners. I believe there is no sin you or I have done but may be washed out in the fountain where sins are lost and souls are saved. I believe that the vilest creature who pollutes society and degrades humanity, may creep into heaven at the back of the thief, shine with the purity, and mingle her voice with the song of angels. I believe no one is to be despaired of; not even the man who is just going over into the pit. Let him turn to Christ—He saves at the uttermost. But I cannot believe that a God of truth, with reverence be it spoken, will tell a lie—and what but a lie were it to say to a man that had wasted his life in ease,

and pleasure, and self-indulgence, Well done ! How could He, who made it His meat and drink to do His Father's will, who lived and labored for His Father's glory, who died for the good of men, say to one who came up with his talent in a napkin, Well done, good and faithful servant—follower of mine, Well done ! Certainly not. None share in Christ's joy but those that, in a sense, have shared in His agony. They enter into His rest who, baptized with the Spirit as well as the blood of Calvary, have entered into His labors. The wages, no doubt, are of grace ; yet no work, no wages ! No work, no wages—as true an aphorism as the well-known saying, No cross, no crown. Crowns are for living brows, but faith without works is dead. Ours be such a life as grace forms and the poet sings :

" I live for those that love me,
For those that know me true,
For the heaven that smiles above me,
And waits my coming too.
For the cause that lacks assistance,
For the wrongs that need resistance,
For the future in the distance,
For the good that I can do."

The Poor.

"If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, and one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit?"—ST. JAMES ii. 15, 16.

THERE are elements in nature which, though not always apparent to the senses, pervade, and, pervading, affect every substance. Heat, for instance. There is warmth even in ice, cold as it feels ; heat as well in the icicles that hang from his thatch as in the glowing iron the smith, amid a shower of sparks, hammers on his ringing anvil ; fire not only in the sun, in the blazing grate, there where swarthy men tap the furnace, and molten iron rolls forth like liquid gold, but fire also, though asleep, and waiting the touch of steel, in the cold and coal black flint. Never dead, nor even altogether dormant, this all-pervading element is everywhere active ; the seeds and eggs which lie buried in the frozen soil owing to it their life, and the great ocean its fluidity—the waves that roar or ripple on its shores, the path it offers to our keels, and the innumerable myriads, from whales to shrimps, that people its depths and shallows.

There are also laws in nature which, though often working in secrecy and silence, are dominant in every place and acting on every substance

—the law of gravitation, for instance. We may recognize it only in its more striking displays: in the spheres where planets roll; in the orbit which our earth describes around the sun; in the skies, where the eagle, pierced by feathery arrow or bullet, and leaving for ever its airy fields, drops dead, like a stone, at our feet; or on the mountain, where some rock, leaping from its lofty base, rushes down into the valley with the speed of lightning and the roar of thunder. Still, this law affects as well the mote of the sunbeam as the sun, and alike shapes the tear on an infant's cheek and the stars in heaven; it is there, running in the sands of an hour-glass; there, sounding in the tinkling of the tiniest rill; and by the same power that bends the tail of a fiery comet and its path back to the sun, it bends the neck of a snowdrop, and thereby preserves from perishing the herald and harbinger of spring.

As it is with such elements and laws in the kingdoms of nature, it is with the presence and influence of religion in a good man's life. It may not be always apparent, but it should be always present—its influence felt where it is not seen. Often, like those greatest powers of nature, heat and light, and electricity and magnetism, acting silently—sometimes, like the will when moving our lips to form words, or our limbs to produce motion, acting unconsciously—yet always acting; so that in everything we do, in every step we take, in every duty we discharge, though it cannot be said with strict propriety that all our actions are religious, yet none are contrary to religion, and all of them are done religiously. Is not this just the

mark at which St. Paul teaches us to aim in saying, "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God?" Doing so, human life, in its lowliest spheres, from man's cradle onward to his grave, or rather from his conversion to his death, may be made one long, continuous, noble, religious service; more sublime than any poem John Milton wrote; more instructive than any sermon of the greatest preacher; and more acceptable far to God than any services performed within dead stone walls, amid cathedral pomp, and before ten thousand spectators.

Now, in the whole range of duties there is none which, if not strictly religious, and, in the highest sense of the expression, a religious service, is more nearly allied to religion, and should be more under its presiding and holy influence, than that charity to the poor which is plainly dictated, and indeed powerfully enforced, in the question, "If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, and one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body, what doth it profit?" Religion imposes this duty on us. In proof of which :

God presents Himself to us *as having a peculiar and tender care of the poor.*

It is not the robust but delicate child of the family, around whom a father's and mother's affections cluster thickest, and are most closely twined. The boy or girl whom feebleness of body or mind makes least fit to bear the world's rough usage, and most dependent on others' kindness, is like those tendrils that, winding themselves round the

tree they spangle with flowers, bind it most closely in their embraces, and bury their pliant arms deepest in its bark. And what a blessed and beautiful arrangement of Providence it is, that they who cost most care, and lie with greatest weight on parents' arms and hearts, are commonly most loved! Helplessness, appealing to our pity, begets affection. Thus was the heart of the rough sailor touched, when, tossing with other castaways in an open boat on the open sea, he parted with a morsel of food, which, hidden with more care than misers hide their gold, he had reserved for his own last extremity. Around him lay men and women; some dead with glassy eyes; some dying, and these reduced to ghastly skeletons; but none of these moved him to peril his own life for theirs. The object of his noble and not unrewarded generosity—for, as if Heaven had sent it on purpose to reward the act, a sail speedily hove in sight—was a gentle boy, that, with his face turned on hers, lay dying in a mother's arms, and between whose teeth the famishing man put his own last precious morsel. Of this feeling I met also a remarkable illustration in my old country parish. In one of its cottages dwelt a poor idiot child; horrible to all eyes but her parents'; and so helpless, that, though older than sisters just blooming into womanhood, she lay, unable either to walk or speak, a burden on her mother's lap, almost the whole day long,—a heavy handful to one who had the cares of a family, and was the wife of a hard-working man,—and a most painful contrast to the very roses that flung their bright clusters over the cottage window, as well as to the lark that,

pleased with a grassy turf, carolled within its cage. Death, in most instances unwelcome visitor, came at length,—to her and to their relief. Relief! so I thought ; and, when the father came with invitation to the funeral, so I said. Though not roughly, but inadvertently spoken, the word jarred on a tender chord ; and I was more than ever taught how helplessness begets affection in the very measure and proportion of itself, when he burst into a fit of sorrow, and, speaking of his beautiful boys and blooming girls, said, If it had been God's will, I would have parted with any of them rather than her.

Now this kindness to the helpless, of which man's home, both in the humblest and highest walks of life, presents so many lovely instances, and which, you will observe, moves the roughest crowd on the street, without taking time to inquire into its merits, to throw themselves into the quarrel of a woman or weeping child, is a flower of Eden, that clings to the ruins of our nature,—one beautiful feature of God's image which has to some extent survived the Fall. “The Lord is very pitiful and of tender mercy.” Well named, “Our Father who is in heaven;” He sets Himself forth in His Word as the Patron and Protector of the poor ; He recommends them in many ways and by many considerations to our kindness ; and teaches us that, if we would be like Himself, we must remember their miseries amid our enjoyments, and fill their empty cups with the overflowings of our own. In proof of this :

Observe the sentiments of His Word toward the poor.

It breathes the most tender regard to them : for example—Whoso reproacheth the poor, reproacheth his Maker ; Blessed is he that considereth the poor, the Lord shall deliver him in the time of trouble ; He shall judge the poor and needy ; He shall stand at the right hand of the poor ; The needy shall not alway be forgotten ; the expectation of the poor shall not perish for ever. How different from the spirit of a sordid age, which, as if there were no worthiness in genius or sense, or bravery, or virtue, or grace, values man by his money ; and speaking of what he is worth, takes into account nothing but his wealth ! There are some, too many, in whose eyes money, like charity, covereth a multitude of sins ; and who would esteem a piece of gilded fir more highly than odorous and imperishable cedar, or marble that vies with driven snow. But the poverty which incurs their contempt demeans no one in the sight of God. He is no respecter of persons. At His height, all ranks appear on a level ; and if there is any advantage, the poor have it, in a better chance, if I may say so, of getting to heaven than the rich. I go, said the dying Rutherford, when summoned in the king's name to appear before an earthly tribunal, to obey a higher summons ; I go to a place where there are few kings. And does not heaven open to the poor a refuge where there are few rich ? St. James asks—My beloved brethren, hath not God chosen the poor of this world, rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom ? And what said St. Paul ?—“God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty ; and base things of

the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are : that no flesh should glory in his presence." Let honest poverty then lift up its head ; next to infants, those unblown buds which the Lord has plucked to open out their beauties on His bosom in heaven, no class is so fully represented in the general assembly of the first-born as the poor. They not only form the largest class on earth, but by much the largest in that kingdom where, before Mary's Son, and by Mary's side, they may lift up her hymn, and sing —He hath put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree ; He hath filled the hungry with good things, and the rich He hath sent empty away.

Observe His enactments on behalf of the poor.

A legal provision for the poor is no modern invention. It is a common notion that regular poor-laws date from the days of Elizabeth of England ; but it is a mistake. They are of much older date. A divine institution, they are found in that system of polity which God set up among His ancient people by the hands of His servant Moses. He did not leave His poor to depend altogether on the fits and chances of a precarious charity. One of the many provisions made to supply their wants, was lately brought to our recollection, when travelling through a valley, where embowering vines threw their clusters over the road ; and planted on rising terraces, occupied the sunny slopes of mountains that rose to skies of deepest blue—clothed with shaggy forests, and crowned with eternal snows. One of the

guides, without consent asked or given, left the path, and, stepping into a vineyard by the way-side, plucked a rich bunch of grapes. The customs of that country may, perhaps, permit a freedom with property which would not be tolerated in ours. Standing on the extremest rights of *mine* and *thine*, we will send a poor vagrant child to jail for taking a turnip to satisfy his hunger ; but in the Holy, might I not add, and Happy Land, where God would have no man starve, the beggar, any hungry Israelite could take such freedoms without let or challenge. His hunger was his need, and God's law was his right to do so. "When thou goest," said the Lord, "into thy neighbor's vineyard, thou mayest eat grapes thy fill ; but thou shalt not put any in thy vessel ;" and so long as a poor man kept within this limit, he had full liberty to satisfy the wants of nature ; nor was branded as a thief for doing so.

Another provision kindly and divinely established on behalf of the poor, in these good old times, was, though in the way of contrast, also recalled to our recollection on passing, one of these autumn days, a harvest-field at home. In a teethed machine, which, raking the stubble-land, gathered up the stalks of grain that the reapers had left, we saw a custom which God forbade on the soil that was trodden by a Redeemer's feet. He, who reserved the seventh day to Himself, reserved, along with the standing corn that grew in the corners of the fields, the gleanings of the whole harvest for the exclusive use of the poor ; and thus all those whom

Ruth and Naomi represented—the widows of Israel, the fatherless, and the orphan—had a share of others' plenty, and their own joy in every harvest.

Nor were the corners which the husbandman was forbidden to reap, and the gleanings of harvests and vineyards which the proprietors were forbidden to gather, the only bounty which the earth poured into the lap of the poor; and to which they had a legal and unchangeable claim. By God's express appointment, the land was to enjoy a sabbath once every seven years, during which the fields were to lie untilled, the olive-trees and vines to grow unpruned. Now, the whole produce of that sabbatical year belonged to the poor; none of it to the proprietor. "Six years," said the Lord, "thou shalt sow thy land; and shalt gather in the fruits thereof: but the seventh year thou shalt let it rest and lie still; that the poor of thy people may eat; and what they leave the beasts of the field shall eat. In like manner thou shalt deal with thy vineyard and with thy oliveyard." God's care of His poor, like a mother's for her babe, extended even to what might be considered minute and trivial matters. The rich were forbidden to make any charge for money lent to a poor man; and if his necessities obliged him to pledge bed or garment, God took care that he should not suffer for it. Many a poor wretch in our cities is left with his children to shiver through cold winter nights, while their blankets are locked up in the broker's store. Better care was taken of an unfortunate Israelite. "In any case," said the Lord, "thou shalt deliver

him the pledge when the sun goeth down, that he may sleep in his own raiment."

Stern and severe as were some aspects of the Mosaic law, it looked kindly upon poverty. That law treated it not as a crime, but as a misfortune deserving the tenderest compassion. And though not required to copy its details, ought we not to preserve their spirit; and in dealing with honest poverty, meet it in the benevolent spirit of the commandment, "If thy brother be waxen poor, and fallen in decay with thee, then thou shalt relieve him, though he be a stranger or a sojourner, that he may live with thee"? No man can read these old laws, so full of tender care and regard for the poor, without seeing the point and feeling the power of the apostle's question, "Whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother in need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?" Let us then, as St. John says, "not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth."

Observe His judgments for the wrongs of the poor.

Thy holy cities are a wilderness, Zion is a wilderness, Jerusalem a desolation; our holy and our beautiful house, where our fathers praised thee, is burned up with fire; all our pleasant things are laid waste. So spake Isaiah, looking with prophetic eye on the future, where he saw the grass grow rank on the city's untrodden streets, and the fox looking out of the temple window, and satyrs dancing in the holy place—the shrine deserted, its lamp extinguished, and the ashes of its altar cold. And what dreadful

sins were those which brought down such judgments on a guilty land—moving God to cast away His people as a loathsome thing, and make them a by-word, and a proverb, and a hissing on the earth?—Sabbath-breaking, idolatry, drunkenness, loose-living?—Yes; these, but others also; wrongs inflicted on the poor. Hear how these bold and bearded prophets speak—“The spoil of the poor is in your houses”—as it is, now, in every house where a fortune has been built on their ruins. Again, “Ye grind the faces of the poor,”—as is done still, when advantage is taken of his necessities to deny the laborer a fair day’s wage for a fair day’s work. Again, “They buy the poor for silver, and the needy for a pair of shoes,”—crimes perpetrated, high treason against God committed, as it were but yesterday, yonder where, under the flag of liberty with its brave motto, All men are born free, the hammer of the auction-room knocked down men and women for so many hundred dollars. These old preachers, asserting the sanctity and liberty of the pulpit, deemed it their right, and used it as a privilege, to proclaim from that place of truth the wrongs of the poor, and the judgment of their oppressors. Inspired of God, they were fearless of man. Hear how they spake to the times: “Is it,” they asked, speaking in their Master’s name, “such a fast that I have chosen—a day for a man to afflict his soul? to bow down his head as a bulrush; to spread sack-cloth and ashes under him? Wilt thou call this a fast, and an acceptable day to the Lord? Is not this the fast that I have chosen? To loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy

burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke? Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and to bring the poor that are cast out into thy house? when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him, and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh?" This is not done. Many of our poor go hungry and houseless.

Stretching themselves upon their couches, eating the lambs out of the flock, and the calves out of the midst of the stall, chanting to the sound of the viol, drinking wine in bowls, anointing themselves with the chief ointments, and not grieved for the affliction of Joseph,—many, realizing this voluptuous picture, leave the poor to herd in filthy dens; and out of houses not fit for human being, not compatible with health, or decency, or virtue, come swarms of ragged, uncared-for, and uneducated children, to turn the tread-mill, and feed the prison. It is not for us to scan the ways of Providence, but the dying echoes of past judgments sound us a solemn, may it be a timely warning. What shall be, says the wise man, is that which hath already been. The wrongs of the poor have a way of avenging themselves. Neglected poverty may rise some day like the blind, strong man to pull down the prosperity and pillars of the land; and when no Joseph shall appear in providence to avert the impending evil, a worse future may come than was foreshadowed in royal dreams, when, in visions of the night, Pharaoh saw the seven lean kine eat up the seven fat. It is with judgments God arms Himself, when He says, "For the oppression of the poor, for the sighing of the needy, now will I arise, saith the

Lord." See how, in this terrible aspect, He arose in that land from whose shores Atlantic waves lately wasted the boom of cannon to our own. Would that after the roar of that fratricidal war, America may hear the voice of rebuke, sounding down from the throne of God! Undoing the heavy burdens, and letting the oppressed go free, out of the broken fetters of emancipated slaves, let her make a lightning-conductor to turn away the bolts of a righteous, roused, and angry God! Then, in the beautiful words of the prophet, "shall her light break forth as the morning, and her health spring forth speedily, and the glory of the Lord shall be her rear-ward, and her darkness shall be as the noon-day—and she shall be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water whose waters fail not."

Observe how Jesus showed His care for the poor.

The poor, He said, ye have always with you, and whensoever ye will ye may do them good—repeating in substance God's much older words, "The poor shall never cease out of the land; therefore I command thee, saying, Thou shalt open thy hand wide unto thy brother; to thy poor; and to thy needy in the land." How beautifully this divine tenderness to the poor comes out welling and warm, in the very terms applied to them; it is not, if a man or woman—but if a *brother or sister* be naked—thou shalt open thy hand wide unto thy *brother*.

In dealing with the poor we are not, however, to put all over in the same boat—huddling together the good and bad, virtue and vice, decent age and hoary sin in our plans, as is done in our

poorhouses. There is no line of separation between peer and peasant so broad as divides the two classes of the poor. There are God's poor, whose cause I chiefly plead. These, reduced to want, brought to suffering by no fault of theirs, have the strongest, at any rate the first, claim on our compassion. There are the poor of providence; and a much more numerous class, the poor of improvidence—the devil's poor, who, reaping as they have sowed, and drinking as they have brewed, are suffering under these righteous laws: "He becometh poor that dealeth with a slack hand;" "If any will not work, neither should he eat;" "He that loveth pleasure shall be a poor man." None are in some respects, I admit, greater objects of compassion than these. It is pitiable to see the wrecks of comfort, and decency, and humanity, that go drifting about our streets. How foul and forbidding with the rags that vice has hung on their back, and the wolfish look that want has given their faces! Yet many of them were once bright and sunny children; dandled on a father's knee; and sung to sleep by kind mothers, who, putting their little innocent hands together, taught their infant lips to pray. We are not to loathe them; nor will, if we remember that they cannot be so black or so bad in our eyes as we were in God's when He gave up His dear Son to save us. Yet how profoundly are they to be pitied! They have got to the dregs of their cup; and how bitter they are! They dare not look back on the past, with its recollections of early innocence, a virtuous home, and the venerable image of a mother or father, whose gray hairs

they brought in sorrow to the grave ; nor dare they look forward on the future ; and unless religion come to their help, what will they or can they do, but “drink to forget their poverty, and remember their misery no more ?” What else are you to expect of impiety under sufferings greater than wrung from God’s servant the cry, “Oh, that my mother had been my grave ; wherefore came I from the womb, that my days should be consumed with shame ?” Theirs is not the poverty that has wealth in heaven, and, touched by lights from another and better world, is a cloud that wears silver edges ; nor is theirs the cup that faith sweetens with the promise of all things working together for good. Without God or hope, they are the poorest of the poor ; and claim in a sense our deepest and holiest compassions.

Still, our compassion must never take the shape of a bounty on idleness and vice. Such philanthropy is mischievous ; and finds not the semblance of encouragement in our Lord’s example. He went about doing good ; and chiefly in the walks of the poor. But how ? He restored health to sickness, vigor to the withered arm, sight to the blind, speech to the dumb, hearing to the deaf, reason to the insane ; and, doing so, taught us the wise charity that helps a poor man to help himself. He did not maintain the poor in idleness, but sent them back with renovated powers to their different fields of labor. It is as instructive as it is remarkable, that on only two occasions did our Lord create food ; and money only on one—leaving the law of God not only to its righteous but beneficent course, “in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat

bread." Not even in the days when He scattered miracles around Him in divine profusion, did He anything to counteract the lesson of those wondrous years when His neighbors heard the carpenter early at His bench ; and honest labor sharpened His appetite and sweetened His simple fare ; and at every week's end, a pattern of filial duty and model to our youths, He poured His earnings into a mother's lap.

While our Lord, employing His miraculous powers to help the poor to help themselves, showed them the wisest and truest kindness, He forgot not, even in His narrow and straitened circumstances, the claims of a helpless poverty. It is evident that the bag which Judas carried served a double purpose ; the poor had their share of its scanty store. The patriarch says, I did not eat my morsel alone. No more did Jesus—with this difference, that Job was rich, but Jesus was poor. Yet what He had, He gave. Ay, His generosity but dimly shadowed forth by the widow who "of her want did cast in all she had, even all her living ;" He gave not His living but His life for a greater poverty than stands in ragged beggar at our door ; He made Himself poor that He might make us rich ; He poured out His soul unto death—dying, the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God.

Charity.

"If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, and one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit?"—ST. JAMES ii. 15, 16.

AN Arab possessed a horse so famous far and near for its beauty, gentleness, and matchless speed, that he had many tempting offers to part with her. He refused them all ; and, in particular, the repeated solicitations of one who offered an enormous price. One day, as, with head wrapped in mantle and lance at rest, he was pressing homewards through the burning desert, his horse suddenly started ; and there, right across the path, lay a poor traveller—alive, for he groaned ; but exhausted, and apparently at the point of death. Like the good Samaritan—for, though fierce, these wild Bedouins have savage virtues, are hospitable and friendly—he dismounted, and finding the unfortunate traveller unable to walk or even to stand, set him in his own saddle. No sooner done than, as if the vigor of the steed had been imparted to its rider, the bowed and languid form became instantly erect ; the horse suddenly wheeled round, sprang off to the stroke, and a laugh of triumph revealed the trick. The man who had offered him an enormous price for the horse was on her back.

Assuming the guise of distress, he had taken advantage of the other's generous feelings, to steal what he could not buy. The injured man did not curse him ; nor, fortified by the stoicism which the Mohammedans' belief in fate imparts, merely bow his head to the misfortune. He soared above it to a height of moral grandeur which few reach. Calling on the other to halt, he said that he had one favor to ask ; it was this, that he would never tell how he had won the horse, because, were that known, it might hinder some from receiving help in circumstances of danger not feigned, but real—and so doom the unfortunate to perish. It is but justice to human nature to add—what indeed shows that fine feelings may lie dormant in the worst of men—that the other was so touched by the unselfishness and nobility of this appeal, that he relented ; and, riding up to the man he had wronged, gave him back his horse.

Human nature is a plant that, unchanged by climate, color, or circumstances, presents the same characters, and bears the same fruit, amid the smoke of crowded cities as in the lonely desert. And this appeal of the Arab, in the advantage so often taken of our kindness, in the bad persons on whom it is bestowed, and the bad uses to which it is turned, touches what forms the greatest obstruction to the flow of charity, and our ready, literal obedience to the precept—"Deal out thy bread to the hungry ; if thou seest the naked, clothe him, and bring the poor that are cast out into thy house." But because others do ill, is no reason why we should cease to do well. The case is one to which the apostle's words are specially appro-

priate, "Be not weary in well-doing." This leads us to remark—

That the *abuse* of our *charity* should never *dry up our hearts*.

Who is David, and who is the son of Jesse? so Nabal replied to David's appeal for help, at the time he and his men were hiding in the wilderness of Paran—adding, by way of reason, this reproach to refusal, "There be many servants now-a-days that break away every man from his master." Perhaps there were. The earthquake that casts towers and castles to the ground, brings vile reptiles out of it; the storm that sinks the noblest ships, throws sea-weeds and *wrack* upon the shore; and the political convulsions of Nabal's time, producing corresponding effects, had very probably thrown the dregs of society, like scum, to the surface; and relaxing the bonds of order set loose bands of marauders on the land. These supplied the sordid churl with an excuse for refusing David; and so does the abuse of our charity those who seek to throw over their covetousness the cloak of some decent pretext. Theirs is never abused; their excuse but the sound of a hollow heart, the rattle that a withered kernel makes within its shell. I do not now address myself to these, beyond reminding them of the solemn, awful, warning words, "Your gold and silver is cankered, and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire."

But there are many who feel for the poor. They would gladly relieve their wants. They are pained to see these wretched mothers, and yet more wretched children; but having found their charity

often misapplied and thrown away on the unworthy and ungrateful, they are afraid to give ; and not seldom tempted, on discovering how they have been imposed upon, to say in their haste as David did in his, All men are liars ! But if charity often fails in its object, so do other things. The sun shines on many a fair blossom that never turns into fruit, and the clouds pour their bounties on fields that yield no harvest. But to leave figures for facts. Education, as well as charity, often fails : it is but a small proportion of children that become ripe scholars. Moral training fails ; how many parents, besides David, have had their hearts wounded and torn by wicked children ! The labors of husbandry fail ; it is but a proportion of the seed that springs ; and a still less proportion that, reaching maturity, in golden sheaves rewards the farmer's toil. Physic fails ; diseases rage, and patients die in spite of it. Even the pulpit fails ; but what preacher thinks of abandoning it, because many of his sermons do no good ; nay, like abused charity, do positive harm —hardening those they fail to soften, and making people as indifferent to the most solemn things as a hoary sexton to the mouldering remnants of mortality, the skulls he tosses out of the grave ?

Man is answerable for duty ; but not for results. And as with faith in a promised blessing, we are always to preach, in season and out of season, to sow beside all waters, you are never to cease your charities. Let not the cold ingratitude of other hearts freeze your own. Ingratitude ! Abuse of mercies ! Who met so much of these as our blessed Lord ? Yet the fountains of His heart were ever full, and, till that heart was broken,

never ceased to flow. His miracles yielded no adequate return ; nor out of thousands to whose limbs they had given vigor, whose tongues they had loosed, on whose blind eyes they had poured light, brought one, so much as one, to cry, Crucify him not. Yet His works of beneficence were like a river that, breaking over every obstacle, and in its ample flood, burying the stones that would impede its course, widens as it runs, and is largest at the beach where it is lost in the sea. So let it be with our sympathies and charities ! May our hearts, with advancing age, grow less sour and more sweet, less hard and more tender, like downy peach or golden apple that ripens to its fall.

Our charity should be discriminating.

Discriminating, first, as to its objects. The "household of the faith" have a prior claim on Christians. "If thy brother or sister be naked and destitute of daily food"—thy brother, thy sister, these tender expressions apply to them in a holy and peculiar sense. Next come others ; and last, but not to be omitted, our enemies. We never rise so high above ourselves, and so near to God as in yielding obedience to these wonderful divine words—If thine enemy hunger, feed him ; if he thirst, give him drink ; for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head.

Careful discrimination is required also both in what we give, and how we give. This is implied in the words, Blessed is the man that *considereth* the poor ; and is brought out fully by those who turned these psalms into rhyme :

■ **Blessed is he that wisely doth
The poor man's case consider."**

This is true of public charity. The poor man's case has not been always wisely considered. Very much the reverse. Listen, for example, to this description of the old Poor-laws of England. "The pauper was led to think that the Government had undertaken to repeal the ordinary laws of nature; that children should not suffer for the misconduct of their parents, nor the wife for that of her husband; and that no one should lose the means of subsistence whatever might be his indolence, prodigality, or vice. They offered food to the idle, and impunity to the profligate." And out of those convents that swarm with lazy monks and idle nuns, where shall we find more questionable, and, if many of their results, more pernicious charities than the splendid hospitals that rise around our city? These, not like its old walls, a defence, are monuments of the folly, if not of the vanity of their founders. There they stand, tempting parents to cast on cold officials the loving burden which God lays on a father's back and in a mother's bosom. Moses might never have been the man he was unless he had been nursed by his own mother. How many celebrated men have owed their greatness and their goodness to a mother's training! What is the law of nature? God has committed children to the care of their parents, and the care of parents to their children; and the charity that interferes with this law of Providence is the parent of evils far greater than it cures. In Scotland, the people once were poor,

but not mean ; and if our countrymen were proverbial for pride and poverty, it was the pride, if such term could be applied to a feeling so noble, which made sons and daughters work late and early, walk in sober gray, and live on the hardest fare to keep a venerable and venerated parent off the poor's-roll. For the aged man or mother there was always a corner, and that the warmest in the cottage, where one whose infancy they had nursed tenderly watched their declining years. Within these homes, sacred to filial piety, I have seen a lovely counterpart to the scene without, where the ivy which once found support in old wall or hollow tree, now embracing, supports it in its turn, and covers its hoar decay with a graceful and glossy mantle. Honor to the humblest home whose thatch covers a parent's head ; where daily toil is cheerfully borne to obey the precept that finds an echo in our hearts, " Honor thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee !"

Discrimination as to whom, and what, and how we give, is also necessary in the distribution of private charity. St. Giles, the patron saint of our city, in devout imitation of Him who made Himself poor to make us rich, is said to have sold all his property for the benefit of the poor,—to feed the hungry and clothe the naked. And what were the result if any of us should blindly follow his example, and pour our fortunes into the lap of the parish that bears the old saint's name ? What good would it do the haggard men and women that there and elsewhere swarm so foul and thick from this rocky castle to yonder silent palace ?

We should make ourselves poor, but, alas ! not them rich. They owe their poverty to intemperance and improvidence ; and a stream of money turned on them being less like water poured on a sand-bed than oil on raging flames, would but increase their wretchedness, and feed the vices that have hung them in rags. "It came to pass that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom ;" but now-a-days rags are more frequently than otherwise the devil's livery.

The love of drink is "the root of all evil." In an obscure and wretched close you have lighted on a decent and devout widow, with no cordial by her dying bed but a cup of water. Happy to find such a person there, as a flower blooming in the desert, you hasten to minister to her necessities ; these words of Jesus sounding in your ears. "Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of the least of them, ye did it unto me." But the wine given to touch dying lips a wretched daughter turns to another purpose ; so one day, when engaged in prayer, the opening of a door, thick and strange mutterings, a reeling step, the noise of one falling, induce you to open your eyes—and there, before you, on the same bed, lies a dying mother and a dead-drunk child. You have often climbed the stair to read and pray by the bed of a woman who talks religiously ; and whose sickly husband, and pale, ill-fed, ill-clad children, have drawn out your bounty. Circumstances occur to excite suspicion,—suspicions darken, deepen ; and one day, from beneath a pillow, on which her head and God's Word lie, you drag the evil to light,—draw

out the drunkard's bottle. Away, high up in a garret room, you find a young man, sinking under a slow decline, and shivering beneath a thin, thread-bare coverlet, in the cold that blows keen through patched and broken window. You try to raise his thoughts to the Saviour and the house of many mansions ; and leave to send warm coverings for his emaciated form. Before your return, that wretched apartment has seen a terrible struggle. Turning a deaf ear to his pitiful cries, unmoved by the tears on his hectic cheek, his father and mother have pulled the blankets from his body ; and sold them for drink. I speak what I know ; what my own eyes have seen, and ears have heard. These are examples of the difficulties that beset the feet of charity, and teach the necessity of discrimination, if we would not increase the evils we attempt to alleviate.

Nor is that all. What we bestow on idleness or on vice is so much taken from the worthy poor. They have the first claim on what we can spare ; and to throw away our means on others is to defraud the widow, the orphan, and poor, innocent, suffering children. It is, therefore, our duty to meet improvidence and intemperance sternly—no doubt with Christian pity, but that mingled with the indignation due to those who are not so much robbing us, or the rich, as heartlessly plundering the worthy poor. There are such—many worthy poor. We should seek them out ; and it should be our happiness to contribute to theirs. Let us earn for ourselves what is better than gold that perisheth—the blessing of them that are ready to perish—a character such as His, who, at once the

painter and the subject, has left us in this likeness of Himself the most beautiful portrait of man, "When the ear heard me, then it blessed me ; when the eye saw me, it gave witness of me. I was eyes to the blind, and feet to the lame. I delivered the poor that cried ; the fatherless and him that had none to help him. The blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon me ; and I caused the widow's heart to sing for joy."

Charity brings its reward—first in this world.

While there is no class more tender-hearted than physicians, I have observed that people who live amid their comforts, and are seldom brought into relationship with suffering, are apt to grow selfish. In such circumstances our nature, like a single tree that stands out in the open field, grows dwarfed and gnarled. Indeed, just as without sin the character of God had not been fully developed, nor shone forth full-orbed—merciful and gracious, as well as great and holy, it is difficult to see how, without the presence of suffering, helplessness, and poverty, our nature could have been brought out in some of its most attractive aspects. Sympathy with suffering, as well as our sense of what is right and wrong, separates us by an immeasurable distance from the lower animals. It presents one of the truest and noblest characteristics of humanity. The pampered dog never turns a piteous eye on some lean, and hungry, and houseless fellow ; but, growling at his approach, and rushing open-mouthed to the assault, drives him from the door. It is fellow-feeling, not mere feeling that raises a man above a beast. It is

that which allies us to the angels who take a lively interest in mundane affairs, and, watching the struggle between good and evil, fill heaven with joy as often as the battle goes for Christ, and a sinner is saved. And those gentle sympathies and kindly feelings which the abodes of poverty awaken, are means whereby the Spirit of God softens us—moulding the plastic heart into the likeness of that blessed Saviour who is “touched with a feeling of our infirmities,” and of that blessed God who is “very pitiful and of great mercy.”

The hammer and the iron are both hardened by the same stroke. So is the heart that, denying pity, does a cruel thing, and the heart that denied suffers it. But acts of kindness improve the *morale* both of him who gives, and of him who gets. Indeed, it is both a sad and a lightsome thing to visit the dwellings of the poor. It clears our sky of vapors. We return more contented and happy; much stouter to endure the petty troubles of our own lot—seeing how comfortable our circumstances are compared with those of others, and how many would be glad to exchange condition and cup with us.

Next to peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, there is no higher happiness on earth than lies in making others happy; nor is man ever so gracious and God-like as when shedding brightness and blessings around him. There is no flower in gay parterre so beautiful as the roses that grow on an orphan’s cheek; no sunshine like the smile of a happy face; no sound of woman’s voice, or lute or harp of sweetest strings, so full of

music as the singing of a widow's heart ; no jewel on queenly brows so brilliant as the tear in eyes we have lighted with gratitude and joy. Yes—it is more blessed to give than to receive ; and these beautiful lines apply as well to charity as to mercy :

" It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven
Upon the place beneath. It is twice bless'd.
It blesseth him that gives, and him that takes."

Charity brings its reward in another world.

Some of the greatest masters have given us pictures of the Last Judgment ; placing Him whom they had often painted dying on His cross amid a crowd of enemies, high above another crowd—crowned and seated on a great white throne. Around Him are the host of heaven, and stretching away into distant space are the hosts of heaven, His angel train. Before Him is the world ; a vast assembly where, all on one level, stand kings and beggars, priests and people, the master and his slave, men and women, childhood and old age. Their attire, or some other expedient of the painter's, reveals what had been their condition ; their place, and the passions on their faces, what it is. Here, on the right hand, some are on their knees, adoring—some forms stretch upward with eager arms—some strike golden harps—some are waving palms of victory ; but all, with their eyes fixed on Jesus, look as if they had never sinned nor sorrowed. God has wiped away all tears from all eyes ; and their beautiful faces so serene, so pure, so radiant with heavenly joy inspire the wish as we gaze on the picture.

Their place be mine ! may I die the death of the righteous ; and may my last end be like His !

Between these and those on the left, what a contrast ! how great a gulf ! Despair, horror, agony, are depicted in their looks ; driven downward by armed angels, they fall headlong into the hell that opens its fiery mouth to receive them ; while above their wail we seem to hear the words of Jesus, as, waving them away, He says, with a touch of sadness in His voice, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels !" These pictures, though often studied as mere works of art, are great sermons. Like Jonah on the streets of Nineveh, they might arrest the feet of busy crowds, as they cry from the walls where they hung, Remember that thou must die, and after death the judgment.

The picture on which I would fix your eyes is one of Christ's own painting. It sets before us not so much the scene as the ground of the last judgment. The multitude are parted into two great classes—at the close of the day to be for ever parted. "These"—I quote our Lord's own words ; the *everlasting* is not mine, but His—"these," proving that no stern prophet ever spake such awful truths as the Saviour's own gentle lips,—"these go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal." Momentous verdicts ! changeless destinies ! On what pivot do they turn ? on this, feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, visits to the sick and to the prisoner in his lonely cell. The tree is known by its fruit. Unhappy trees on which Christ, coming to seek such fruit, finds none ! I am not saying that we

are not to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints ; or that there is no importance in creeds, or difference between churches ; or that if people are sincere, it is of no consequence what they believe ; or that there is any other name given under heaven whereby we can be saved but the name of Jesus. I have no hope but His cross. I may give all my goods to feed the poor, and my body to be burned ; yet if I have not love, it profiteth me nothing. Still our Lord exalts charity to the poor into a test of piety—of living, saving faith. Identifying Himself with them, He says, “Inasmuch as ye did or did it not unto one of the least of these, ye did or did it not to me !” David returned to Saul, bringing the giant’s head ; the spies came back to Moses, loaded with grapes from Eshcol ; Jesus ascended to His Father, bearing in His hand the soul of the thief, blood-won trophy of His victory ; one has said that Wilberforce went up to God, taking with him the broken fetters of eight hundred thousand slaves. What proofs of true piety shall we carry to heaven ? What works will follow us ? Shall widows and orphans, the wretched and the ragged, coming from homes which our bounty has blessed, and our prayers have sanctified, though not our saviours—“for there is one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus”—be our witnesses ? May their testimony, that the same mind was in us that was in Christ, call down on us this gracious approving sentence, “Well done, good and faithful servant ; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.”

OUR FATHER'S BUSINESS

OUR FATHER'S BUSINESS.

Our Model.

THE alarm, A child lost!—like the cry, A man overboard!—is one that goes to all hearts. I have known it stop the business, and engross all the interests of a rural neighborhood. Leaving the shuttle on the loom, their cattle in the field, and ploughs standing idle in the furrow, while women wept and hoped and feared and prayed, men,—some on horseback and some on foot,—scoured the country; nor ceased at nightfall, but, with shouts and gleaming torches, pursued their search through trackless moor and forest. Even in cities, where there is less community of feeling, like a rock that, lifting up its head mid-river, and disturbing its even flow, stays for a moment the rush of waters, a lost child sobbing, crying in the street arrests the stream of passengers, and moves all to pity,—even those who have but time to ask, What is it? as, casting a kind glance on the distracted creature, they hurry on. There is a sight more touching than a child crying for its mother. It is a mother, flying through the

streets with dishevelled hair and panting bosom, pallor on her cheek and terror in her eye, who cries for her child ; while fancy, conjuring up all manner of horrid evils, with pictures of its dead form or unpitied sufferings, wrings her heart and almost shakes her reason.

Such a sight, when the crowds who had gathered from all parts of the country, and of the world indeed, taking their departure, had left Jerusalem to comparative repose, awakened the kind interest of many there. People had met such a woman at the dead of night ; and had seen her by day going up and down the city addressing eager inquiries both to acquaintances and strangers,— looking more haggard and feeling more hopeless as the weary hours wore on, that gladdened her with neither sight nor tidings of her son. That woman was Mary, our Lord's mother. Three days has she sought Jesus ; and nothing now remains to do but turn to God. All other, all earthly hope has failed her. Wan and weary, supported by the kind man and husband who had shared her sorrows, she turns her faltering steps to the house of God. She will cast her burden on the Lord, and commit her lost one to the care of His heavenly and only Father. And a mother who had more than any other **a right to do so**, and betake herself to that refuge in the hour of trouble, we seem to hear her saying

I to the hills will lift mine eyes,
From whence doth come mine aid ;
My safety cometh from the Lord,
Who heaven and earth hath made.

Staggering beneath her burden as much, perhaps, as Abraham when, to his amazement and consternation and horror, God addressed the patriarch, saying, "Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and offer him for a burnt-offering on a mountain that I will tell thee of," Mary enters the Temple with faith and foot faltering. What a revulsion of feeling at the sight which meets her astonished eyes ! Ready to sink to the ground under the sudden emotion, she can hardly believe them. Is it a vision ? Does she dream ? No. 'Tis He—the very form, face, and voice of Jesus, her own lost and long-sought son. The centre of all eyes, of a crowd that hushed to silence regard Him with gaping wonder,—wiser than the wisest, more subtle than the subtlest, He sits there among gray-haired elders, asking and answering questions.

Happy mother ! whom we expect to see, regardless of all forms and of any presence, rush forward under the impulses of affection to throw her arms around her child, and cover him with impassioned kisses. But what strangely constituted creatures we are ! We swing of a sudden, like a pendulum, from one state of feeling to another, and that perhaps the very opposite ; as I once happened to see illustrated by a mother who had dared, and done a noble deed. Our horses suddenly turning a corner, were going down at full gallop on a child that sat, heedless of danger, right in their path. To rein them in was impossible. Its death seemed inevitable ; and we sat transfixed with horror to see it trodden beneath their hoofs, crushed below the wheels. At that fearful moment, a woman, stooping

like a hawk on its prey, darted from a doorway across the road, and with the hot breath of our horses on her pallid cheek, plucked her infant from among their feet. It was bravely done. But what a strange revulsion of feeling succeeded her mortal fright? She did not, as we expected, clasp the child to her beating bosom, cover it with kisses, or drop on her knees to give thanks to God for her own and its hairbreadth escape. The feeling of terror suddenly gave place to a violent burst of anger; and, resenting the alarm the child had given her, she gave it a sound, sharp beating.

In this incident we found a key to explain what had always seemed the strange conduct of Jesus' mother on finding her son; and, also, what we have ever since regarded as one of the many indirect evidences, but of all the most satisfactory, of the truth of Scripture. In the hands of a novelist, for example, the part Mary acted would have assumed a quite different character. What a pathetic scene we should have had?—the mother in transports of gratitude throwing herself on her knees, and rising in transports of joy to throw herself on the neck of her child, and cry as she clasped him to her beating bosom: "My son that was dead is alive again, that was lost is found!" Far more true to nature—as I saw her on her trial—the evangelist shows us Mary acting another part; displaying no such dramatic pathos. In her, as in that other mother, anger, or a feeling akin to it, seems to have suddenly succeeded to terror; and going up to Jesus, not to fall on His neck and kiss Him, but to complain of the fright He has given her, with, I cannot help fancying, displeasure in her

look, and harshness in her tones, she addresses Him, saying, "Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? behold, thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing." A sharp question this. In reply, Jesus, with mingled looks of love and dignity, turns to Mary, and, fixing on her those eyes which penetrated others' thoughts, but had often strange, deep, mysterious meanings of their own, He gently remonstrates, saying, "How is it that ye sought me? wist ye not that I must be about *my Father's business?*" Though not intended on her son's part, Mary may possibly have felt in this reply the sharp edge of a rebuke. No wonder at least that on receiving such an answer from the lips of such a child, for Jesus was then but twelve years old, she was struck with it, pondered it, tried to sound its depths, and, waiting for further light on its mysterious meanings, kept it in her heart. So may we keep it in ours ; not, however, as a mystery, but a truth ; signally illustrated and fully explained by the consecration of Christ's labors, and life, and death to the glory of God and the salvation of men. This was His Father's business. And in dedicating His life to such lofty purposes, Jesus supplies us with a model on which to fashion our own.

This is of the highest importance ; what concerns the end and manner of our life being of far more consequence than anything that belongs to the nature and circumstances of our death. It is natural, I admit, to take a lively interest in the scenes of the dying chamber, the expressions and experience of departing saints ; yet so little countenance does this feeling receive from Scripture

that the Bible, which contains a pretty full account of the lives of many saints, is, in almost every instance, silent on the subject of their deaths. One after another, they appear on the stage to play their different parts. But the curtain usually drops as the last act begins ; and the saint vanishes from sight with some such brief, simple record as this : "he died," or "he was gathered to his fathers" or "angels carried him to Abraham's bosom." In regard to this, one cannot but be struck with the marked difference between God's lives of the saints and those which man writes—in fact, most of our biographies. And may not the manner in which the Bible drops a veil over the last scene be intended to warn us against attaching much importance to dying frames—to teach us this great lesson, that, in all but a very few exceptional cases, our destiny in eternity turns on the way we pass our life, not on the way we close it ? Who lives by faith, who lives to Christ, however he dies, shall find death to be gain. He who takes care of the nature of his life need feel no anxiety whatever about the character or issues of his death—the great question we should ask respecting others, and which shall one day be asked respecting us, being, not How did he die ? but How did he live ?

The close of the seasons often supplies a criterion of their character ; stubble-fields where the sheaves stand thick and tall, farm-yards swollen with the fruits of a lavish harvest, speak of an early spring and a genial summer, long days bright with sunshine and soft with showers. The close of a voyage also often reveals its character. From the pier-head where I have watched a homeward-bound ship

enter the harbor, I could tell from her condition the weather she had encountered on distant seas —sails blown to tatters, bulwarks gone by the board, the stump of a mast rising ragged from her deck told the story of the voyage, and how the weather-beaten crew, who now congratulate each other as she floats into the dock, had battled with giant waves and well-nigh perished in the roaring tempest. But the close of man's life affords no such means of judging of its character. I have indeed seen death-beds, not a few, to which I could point, saying, "Mark thou the perfect man and behold the upright, for the latter end of that man is peace;" where the chamber of death seemed the vestibule of heaven, and, after reading how Lazarus was borne by angels to Abraham's bosom, one almost expected to see their celestial forms and hear the rustling of their wings. How bright his sunset, for example, what a blessed peace his, who said to the friend that watched by his side, "If I am able to hear when the last moment approaches, be sure to tell me of it. I should like so well to know that a few breaths more, a short struggle more, and I am in glory with my Lord and Saviour."

But so to die, to go up to Mount Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads, to travel the dark valley singing, with the shout and step of a conqueror, trampling the last enemy beneath our feet, to expire with Christ's dear name trembling on our lips—that name our last word on earth, as it shall be the first we raise our hands to speak in heaven—is not granted to all who close at death a life of true love to God and saving faith in His Son. Some saints have died raving mad; others

in dark despair ; not a few in deep despondency—their cry an echo of the cross, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me ?—their faith finding in the disease of which they were dying what the sun finds in the cloud-bank behind which he sinks, a veil to obscure his light and conceal his glorious form. On the other hand, death is often preceded by an apathy, a listlessness, an obtuseness of feeling which renders the mind incapable of anxiety or alarm ; and passes with many thoughtless ones for the peace of God. Thus the wicked have sometimes “no bands in their death ;” nay, sometimes under delirium and a fevered brain, impenitent sinners die amid visions of glory, and with expressions of divinest rapture on their lips. In fact, the frame in which people die depends so much on the nature of their disease, so much on constitutional tendencies, so much on many accidental circumstances, that it forms no safe standard whereby to judge either what was their character in this world, or what is their condition in the next. By its fruit the tree is known. According to the deeds done in the body, whether they were good or evil, is the last award. The judgment at God’s bar turns not on the character of men’s deaths, but of their lives ; and therefore the question which determines whether heaven or hell shall be our portion is not, how we died, but how we lived ?

In these circumstances it is a great advantage to possess in God’s Word not only full instructions how to live, but in His Son, what is more valuable than volumes of instructions, a model, a perfect model, after which to shape our lives. One of the dangerous tendencies of these times is to thrust

Calvary and its cross into the background—to modify, and by modifying to emasculate, Paul's grand saying, "I am determined not to know anything among you, but Jesus Christ and him crucified." Jesus Christ they know, but not Him crucified—not Him as a sacrifice for sin and the substitute of sinners, as fulfilling in our stead the demands of the divine law, satisfying the claims of justice, and reconciling the offender to an offended God. This is a vital, a cardinal doctrine. Who holds it fast will find the gates of hell shall not prevail against him. Plainly announcing it long ages ago, Isaiah said, "He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities : the chastisement of our peace was upon him ; and with his stripes we are healed ;" and believing it, thousands since then have gone through the river to find the flood of Jordan part before the feet of the Priest. But as many others have been, the present error may be a reaction from an opposite but also an erroneous position ; the tendency of our minds being, under the law of action and reaction, to swing from one extreme to another. What if God, by permitting an error which disparages fundamental doctrines and rings senseless changes on a personal Christ, to disturb the Church, and lead some astray, may be rebuking men for having dwelt, not too much on Christ as a Propitiation, but too little on Christ as a Pattern ? Valiant for the truth, and holding it fast, let us resent a heresy which, making light of the infinite evil of sin and the infinite holiness of God's law, must end in making light of the Saviour it professes to honor. At the same time, like wise men,

we may extract the honey while we reject the sting ; and learn from these errors, not to look at Christ's death less, but at His life more : not to trust in Him less as a Mediator, but to copy Him more as a Model.

A sense of the hopelessness of such an attempt may hinder it being made. People say, Who can succeed in modelling their life on Christ's—making their lives a fair and graceful copy of His ? To rise to such thoughts as His seems as impossible for us as for a bird of humble roost to follow the eagle when, springing from her rocky nest, she soars aloft, cleaving the sky till her lessening form is lost in its azure depths. We are required to make our light shine before men : but to shine with the light of such works as Christ's seems as impossible for us as for a taper that burns its little hour to blaze like the sun, when, rising each morning with unabated and unabating splendor, he bathes air, and earth, and ocean in one flood of light. To live like Christ !—ah, who is sufficient for these things ? For fallen man to attempt it seems presumption—Scripture, and our own sad experience teaching us that we are not able of ourselves to think even one good thought !

Nevertheless the motto of a Christian is *Nil desperandum*—I despair of nothing. With resources to draw on which the world knows nothing, if our faith is in any degree commensurate with God's faithfulness we may address ourselves to duties the most difficult, saying “Who art thou, O great mountain ? Before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain.” In this the believer is no fanatic, or fool ; no builder of castles in the air. He knows in

whom he has believed ; and what in others were the highest presumption, is in him a solid, well-founded trust. With God nothing is impossible ; nor impossible with one who, responding to a divine call, holds God's Word in his hand, and feels God himself at his back. It may be held an axiom of the Christian faith, that everything commanded is come-at-able—"I can do all things," says Paul, "through Christ, who strengtheneth me."

To attempt to live like Christ is no doubt a high, as it is a holy, object. To sing like Milton, to make discoveries like Newton, to climb the lofty solitude of the Macedonian who achieved the conquest of the world, are mean in comparison with it. Since Christ united the divine to our human nature, who takes Him for a model aims, if I may say so, at being a God in miniature,—at presenting in the beneficence of his life, in a pure heart and a holy nature, such an image of the Godhead as we see of the sun in the lake that shines in his light, and reflects his dazzling form on its placid bosom. Scripture calls us to take prophets and martyrs, apostles and saints, for models—to walk in the footsteps of the flock ; and reading the lives of the great and the good, we are to catch their spirit, and inflame our piety at their fires. But, without despising or disparaging these, we are to look higher still. Though his back is bent with toil, and his manners are rustic, and he has no home but a cot, and knows little of books beyond his Bible, the most ambitious of men, and yet the humblest, the believer, is inspired with the loftiest aims. His aim is not to be holy, as Paul, or Peter,

or John, or saints in glory, or even the angels before the throne. It is as God is holy that he seeks to be holy,—perfect as his Father in heaven is perfect—in nature, though not in measure ; just as in nature, though not in measure, the tiniest cup that is filled to the lip is as full as the great sea at flood-tide.

But there is a view of Christ as our model which makes the imitation of Him appear less impracticable ; for, as the great circle of the heavens seems to bend towards, and touch, and embrace the earth at the horizon, so the Son of the Most High, though exalted apparently above all approach in His divinity, appears near to us in His humanity. In that nature He presents us with a model we may more hopefully attempt to imitate. How should it encourage us to attempt it, and, not disheartened by successive failures, to try it again and again, to remember that Jesus, though without sin, was made in all points like His brethren,—bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh ; with a heart strung in every respect like our own ? Animated by the breath of God, the dust of Palestine, like that of Paradise, could have produced, in the second Adam, a man with every faculty mature. But Jesus sprang into being like one of us. He despised not the Virgin's womb ; and passed through all the common phases of human life—His condition and connections in the world in no apparent manner differing from ours. A babe, He was rocked in a cradle and fed at the breast like others. A child, He had the feelings, and entered into the common joys of childhood ; He might have been seen in his night-dress lisping

prayers at His mother's knee ; nor was He made in all points like as we are if he stood apart from the innocent sports of the boys and girls of Nazareth. A man, He went to church on Sabbath ; and on other days, the sun lighting its Maker to His daily toil, He wrought at a bench, and ate His bread in the sweat of His brow. He was bound to others by the ordinary ties of humanity—this man was a cousin ; these were His brethren and sisters ; and, among the women who followed Him to Calvary, and wept by His cross, she on whose form, as it sinks fainting into John's arms, His last earthly look is fixed, is His mother. Indeed, so like was He in all things to His brethren that, until the last three years of His life, His townsmen never seem to have suspected who or what Jesus was,—that He was anything more than Joseph's son. They never so much as fancied that the God of their worship was present in the synagogue ; that the Messiah, of whose glorious coming the preacher discoursed in glowing colors, was there—in the meek, modest, gentle, unassuming man who sat by Mary, listening to the sermon.

And for what purpose did the Son of God thus identify Himself with our humanity ? In tasting every common cup—the obedience of childhood and labors of manhood, the pleasures of friendship and the sharp arrows of ingratitude, the kindness of affection and the cold neglects of selfishness, the joy of feasts and the grief of funerals, all they suffer who toil for daily bread, or, animated with philanthropy, toil in the cause of others—our Lord not only thereby became a High Priest to sympathise with and succor us, as one touched with a

feeling of our infirmities, but, leaving His footprints on the sands of time, He became an Example that we should follow His steps. Would any one know how to live, let him turn to Christ's history and read it there. See how He lived devoted to the glory of God and the good of men : how He made it His meat and drink to do His Father's will, and also reverenced and obeyed His parents ; how He honored the Sabbath Day, and kept the whole law of God ; how, neither envious of the rich, nor ambitious to rise above His circumstances, He submitted to a humble lot, and patiently endured its trials ; how He bore a life-long humiliation with contentment, and His few brief honors with humility ; how He cherished His friends, and forgave His bitterest enemies ; how, gently rebuking the bad, and kindly raising the fallen, instructing the ignorant, helping the weak, shielding the oppressed, pitying all that sorrowed, relieving all that suffered, loving all that lived, He lived for others, not for Himself. In these things He set us an example. And, as I have seen a weaver on his loom working the beautiful flowers of a pattern into his web, let us by God's gracious help try to weave a copy of Christ's life into the body of our own. Men of God, for you no better shield against temptation, or stouter buckler in a battle-day, no better curb to pull us up on the edge of sin, nor sharper spur to urge us onward in the path of duty, than a constant imitation of Christ ; the habit of bringing all our conduct to this holy test—Had Christ been in my circumstances, how would He have acted?—Would He have felt, would He have spoken, would He have acted as I am doing? The Spirit helping us, we

shall thus become living epistles of Jesus Christ, seen and read of all men ; true followers of Him whose history is summed up in this brief but weighty sentence, "He went about doing good." With aims no less lofty, let His holy, beautiful beneficent life be the model of ours ; and its motto—nobler than any ever blazoned on banners of silk, in letters of gold, and borne before the greatest kings—its motto this : **TO ME TO LIVE IS CHRIST, AND TO DIE IS GAIN**

Our Object.

THE lower animals are not more distinguished from man by their want of sense than by their want of sympathy ; less so, perhaps, since some—the dog and elephant, for instance—are remarkably sagacious, and cannot fairly be called irrational creatures. The animals have feelings ; they have strong feelings, fear, hope, jealousy, envy, hatred, and love. What more, for instance, could any mother do than the hen that, with courage foreign to her usual nature, on observing the hawk in the sky, calls her brood, and, facing the danger, covers them with her wings ; or the shaggy bear that, placing her cub behind her, confronts the hunters, and offers her bosom to their spears ? But though God has endowed the brute creatures with feeling, they have no fellow-feeling, or sympathy, as it is called. The fat and pampered favorite growls when some poor, gaunt, famished, homeless dog ventures near his heaped and ample trencher. The cattle of our fields browse on, careless of the dying struggles, unmoved by the dying groans, of some fellow of the herd ; and so destitute in their natural state do the lower animals seem of fellow-feeling, or anything akin to it, that I have never seen the sufferings of their fellows disturb or interfere in any degree with their ordinary sensual enjoyments.

While, in the words of an Apostle, “none of us liveth to himself,” they live to themselves: that is one of their most remarkable characteristics; and those, therefore, degrade humanity most, and bring it nearest to the condition of the brutes, who live for themselves, think only of themselves, have no other aim but their own profit and advantage, who, to express their character in one word, are *selfish*.

But selfishness, that base and degrading passion, is characteristic not only of such as God has never endowed with reason, but of those also who, having had, have lost it. Inside those gloomy walls where pity shelters and science seeks to cure insanity, one of the most common and not least painful aspects of the strange and melancholy scene is, that every one there appears to live for himself. There is a community, numbering hundreds, or thousands perhaps, but little, and, in the worst cases, no communion. Each one walks apart. They take no interest in one another. They laugh, they weep; but there is no infection in their grief or gaiety. Each is occupied with his own thoughts, engrossed with his own imagined wrongs, or states, or pleasures. That is one of the most common and characteristic features of the insane: and they therefore degrade humanity, presenting it in one of its most humbling aspects, who, though not bereft of reason, think only of themselves; and, again, to express their character in one word, are *selfish*—who, in the language of Scripture, “look not every man upon the things of others, but every man on his own things.”

In regard to this, as to other passions, men

enter the world distinguished by original differences. With hearts, like instruments so finely strung that they sound to the slightest touch, some have much more sympathy than others ; yet all are by nature, to a greater or less degree, both self-willed and selfish. Who, that knows himself, does not feel that, even where this passion is held in most control by reason, and somewhat cured by grace ? And what mother has not discovered it—seen the inborn evil breaking out in the temper of her sweetest child ? Like a rose-bud with petals opening to the light of day, and bathed in the pearly dews of morning—gentle, playful, love beaming in its eyes, innocence in its winning smile, and with its sweet caresses, as it flings its arms around her neck, winding itself round her heart, there is no object in the world so beautiful in a mother's eyes as her babe ; yet she soon learns that what seemed a young angel just lighted, like a sunbeam, on this evil world, is, in fact, a fallen creature, and may become a serpent to sting the bosom it lies on. See how it will have its own way ; how it rebels against authority ; how its little hand is put out to grasp what is another's ; how it grudges to share its pleasures with any one else ! Let its will be crossed, and its angry cries, its tears, the struggles of its impetuous though impotent rage, show that selfishness is a bad, base passion, common to every human breast.

Therefore, here, on the very threshold of my subject, I wish to say that a change of heart is an indispensable preliminary to the Christian life—its first step and starting-point. Without

that, with inborn selfishness unrestrained, unconquered by the power of grace, man cannot attain to the end and objects of the Christian life. To say "Christ liveth in me, and the life that I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me," we must be able to say with Paul, "I am crucified with Christ." To follow the eagle in her flight, we must be furnished with eagles' wings ; and to walk in the steps of Him who lived not for Himself, nor died for Himself, nor rose for Himself, nor now reigns for Himself, we must be born again, and baptized with the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Who would have the manners, must have the mind that was in Christ.

In opening up our subject, the End or Object, namely, for which Christians should live, I may show what that is by showing what it is not. Well, then, It is not living to ourselves.

This, as I have already said, is to be selfish. And such he is whose horizon, unlike the vast rim of the sea or distant range of snow-crowned Alps, has no wider bounds than self ; and whose heart, like a man's coffin, is just his own measure ; long enough and broad enough to hold himself—with room for no one else. I have said that such people ally themselves, not to angels, for they minister to them who are heirs of salvation, and, making heaven ring to their songs, rejoice over every sinner that repenteth : nor to Christ, for He went about doing good, and made it His meat and His drink to do, not His own, but His Father's will ;—they ally themselves to the brute creation, among all which their most perfect type perhaps

is the unsocial, low crustacean which bores itself a hole in the sea-rock ; nor ever leaves that narrow home to expatriate in the freedom of the deep ; nor of all God's creatures holds communion with any but itself. Not God, not Christ, not others and others' good, but self is, I cannot say the sun—for that is a glorious object—the centre around which their thoughts, desires, fears, hopes, wishes, all keep turning. Like the whirlpool that sucks in straws and sea-weed, tiny boats, and gallant ships, self swallows up all the interests, great or little, that belong to others in its vast devouring vortex. Voracious as a whirlpool, it is insatiable as the grave ; and, crying “ Give, give, give,”—takes all, to render nothing back. If such people are ever converted, like David they will address God, saying, “ I was as a beast before Thee.”

Selfishness has worse features still. Regarded in the aspect they present to God, the selfish appear yet more hateful ; their ruling passion assumes a yet darker character. It shuts God out of the heart ; and turning the soul, once His bright, holy temple, into that dark, dreary, atheistic spot in the universe where He is not, it is to be regarded as the greatest impiety. It thrusts God from His throne, and places man in His room ; the true object of every selfish man's worship being himself. Now, for myself, I would rather be a Papist worshipping the Saints, some of whom are stars in heaven—even a blinded Pagan, in stocks and stones, worshipping forms within whose cold breasts no foul passions ever burned, than be the man who is his own God. In hi case how foul the temple, and contemptible the divinity ! What a contrast

to his feelings those of the holy patriarch, as, addressing God, he said, "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes."

Many, I know, regard selfishness as a mere defect in disposition, no serious or grave offence ; but this living to one's self is not only one of the greatest sins against nature, allying us to the beasts that perish—not only one of the greatest sins against our fellow-creatures, shutting up our bowels of compassion from them—not only one of the greatest sins against Jesus Christ, who, living and dying for others, says, " If any man will be my disciple, let him take up his cross, deny himself daily, and follow me,"—and not only one of the greatest sins against God, whom it denies and, in a sense, dethrones—but is the seed and sum of all sins whatever. For though sin, Proteus-like, assumes many forms, selfishness is the parent and bitter root of all. Trace sin up to its source, whether in earth or heaven, and it will be found so. The pride that ruined the angels, and cast them from their celestial seats ; the ambition that fired our first mother's bosom, and led to the crime that wrecked this fair world and ruined our happiness, may both be traced to self. To the passion which makes our own will man's supreme rule and our own gratification his highest good, we may therefore apply, with the slight change of a single word in each case, the words of Paul and John : these namely, " The love of *self* is the root of all evil"—" If any man love *self*, the love of the Father is not in him."

Observe further, that one who, selfishly inclined, lives to himself is not only unlike God and God's Son, the Father who gave the Son, and the Son who, willing to be given, gave Himself for us, but is unlike any of God's works. What has the Creator made that exists for itself? Not the sun—bright image of Divine beneficence, he burns to warm, and shines to light the worlds that roll around him. Not the sea—image of Divine fulness, which, furnishing food and a home to innumerable myriads, teems with happy life; and extending its blessings to lands the furthest from its shores, hangs their skies with the clouds that temper the torrid heat, and supply the rains which clothe their hills with forests and their vales with fields of corn. Not, as I will show, the meanest plant that grows—the lichen, for example, which casts its gray mantle over the aged ruin, or, appearing but a dusky stain, colors and clothes the rocks. Doomed to decay, like everything that lives on earth, it dies, and turned into dust, becomes a few grains of soil. These, accumulating in the course of time and washed by showers into some fissure, by and by form a suitable seed-bed. Into this, swept by the tempest, or dropped by passing bird, an acorn falls, which germinates; and fed by the lichen dust, grows; and sending out its roots for nourishment, rises at length into a stately oak. This offers a home to the birds of the air that build among its branches, and sheds its fruit to feed the boar and other beasts of the forest. It lives not for itself. Nor dies for itself; for when at length its stately trunk falls, groaning to the woodman's axe, it gives strength and body to the ship that,

manned by patriots, thunders on the deep in freedom's battle, or, bearing a flag of peace, and bound on a holy mission, carries to distant shores and savage homes the peaceful heralds of the Cross. And what thus characterizes even the meanest of God's works on earth must characterize the highest—which I take to be a renewed, redeemed, sanctified man, one bought with the blood and baptized with the Spirit of Christ. He therefore has, and can have, no pretensions to regard himself as a true Christian who, whatever his Church, or creed, or condition, eaten up of selfishness, lives only, or chiefly, for himself. Unless the same mind be in us that was in Jesus Christ, we are none of His.

Baptized in the Spirit as well as in the blood of Jesus, Christians would not live to themselves though they could ; and, on the other hand, there is a sense in which even the selfish could not though they would. Such is every man's influence either for good or evil within the domestic and social circles in which he moves. By way of illustrating that remark, let me tell what happened when a lighthouse was finished which stands eleven miles out at sea in sight of the windows of my old country manse ; and in which, whether seen standing erect on its rock by day amid the raging billows, or shining like a star through the gloom of night, to guide ships off the reef and on to their desired haven, always seemed the very type of one who, as a Christian, fills a like blessed office, and rests on a like sure foundation. This, the Bell Rock Lighthouse, is exposed on every side to the full sweep of stormy seas ; and with such power do

they hurl themselves against it, that, rising on its sides, they often wrap it in a sheet of foam—sometimes send the water in flowing cataract clean over its lofty summit. Now the first storm that tried its strength, entirely shook the confidence of its keepers. What alarmed them was not that the waves running up to the very summit wrapped its sides in foam, and them in darkness ; but that the tower when struck by some giant billow, as if struck also with terror and anticipating destruction, trembled from top to bottom. In terror themselves, they hastened with the tidings to the architect, who, to their surprise, received them as “tidings of great joy.” He doubted no longer the stability of the fabric. When struck on one part the whole building felt the shock, every stone seemed to sympathize with another, just because every course was firmly fixed to every other course, and the tower, though built of many separate blocks, was bound together as if it were a monolith, one single stone—to use the language of the Psalms, was “compactly built together.” And all are thus bound together ; to this extent at least, that every man makes his character, his life, his habits felt by others ; exerting an influence on all around him either for good or evil.

Indeed the influence which, through the law of sympathy, we exert on others, those above and below, as well as those beside us, is involved in the very idea of society ; and be it a Church, or nation, or family, that community is, as a community, in its most perfect state, where this sympathy is most felt by all its separate members. Hence the answer of the Greek sage to a question often dis-

cussed, this namely, "Which is the best form of government?"—an autocracy with all power vested in one person; or an aristocracy where the power of government is divided among a few leading men; or a democracy where, often swayed hither and thither by fitful gusts of sudden passion, the multitude rule?—The best government, said Plato, is that under which the meanest citizen can suffer no wrong but all the rest will feel it.

This noble utterance of heathen lips, another form of the inspired expression "no man liveth to himself," enunciates a grand principle which runs through the Divine government, and forms the very life and soul of practical Christianity. What saith the Scriptures? "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world." And to what a great extent are the evils that now afflict society due to the neglect of this principle?—traceable to this, that people, forgetting the duties they owed to others, have lived to themselves. For long years the upper classes, if not, as in many other countries, treading the lower under foot, treated them with neglect; and, though mistaken, as events are proving, fancied that, separated by a great gulf from the vulgar throng, they might move in their higher spheres, living to themselves. Making money or enjoying its pleasures, the middle and wealthier classes left the poor, unpitied and unhelped, to struggle on, and at length sink by thousands into degradation and destitution—they also refused to be regarded as their brother's keepers, thinking that they could safely indulge

their selfishness. Alas ! even Christian churches, I am sorry to add, fostering unseemly jealousies, and wasting their strength on wretched quarrels, also lived for themselves ; often subordinating the high claims of souls to the petty interests of a sect.

"Shall I not visit for these things, saith the Lord ? shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this ?" He has done so. How have our sins found us out ? By the drunkenness that is our national disgrace, by the gross ignorance, the brutal manners, and godless habits of great masses of the people ; by prisons full of criminals, and workhouses full of paupers ; by the burdens which indolence entails on industry, and crime on virtue ; by the prostitution that walks, and the drunkards that reel, along our streets ; by the vast numbers, amounting in London alone, for example, to a million and a half, who never enter a house of God, God is teaching us that the laws of the moral are as sure as those of the material world—those that govern the tides of ocean or the seasons of the year ; and that, since no man liveth to himself, one of these moral laws is this, that, if we neglect the duties we owe to others, whether they belong to our family, to our neighborhood, or to society in general, not they only, but we ourselves shall suffer for it in the end. Crimes committed against, as well as benefits bestowed on others, like bread cast on the waters, come back many days hence.

And now, though it anticipates what properly belongs to another branch of the subject, I would here answer the question which, prompted by a feeling that they have lived too much to themselves

and missed the grand end of a Christian life, some may be ready to ask, in the words of that grand old cry, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" Well, every man and woman on this earth have their mission ; and having to seek, not only our own salvation and welfare, but the salvation, welfare, happiness, and advantage of others also, there is none who may not adopt the words of Nehemiah, saying, "I have a great work to do!" Divine grace is equal to it, if you go about it wisely—"My grace shall be sufficient for you," says God. Now you have a post in this life assigned to you, keep it ; a field of labor, cultivate it ; a sphere of usefulness, public, or private, or both perhaps, fill it with light ; opportunities of doing good, improve them—remembering that as there is not one within reach of your voice, who sleeps beneath the same roof, who works in the same shop or field, who worships in the same church, who is embraced within the wide or narrow arms of the same social circle, over whom you may not exert an influence for evil, who may not be the worse of your company, so there is none who may not be the better of it, over whom you may not have an influence for good. Your influence may be small, but so is the candle which burns in a cottage window ; yet at what a long distance is it seen, and how large the sphere it fills with light? I know a man, for instance, who, at the close of each day's work, turned his steps to the prison and with his Bible on his knees, or on his knees on the floor, spent the evening hours in its gloomy cells ; seeking to instruct the ignorant and reclaim the criminal, and raise the fallen. The judgment-day shall show

how many he restored, penitent and pardoned, to the bosom of God ; but it is certain that, alone and single-handed, he rescued and reformed four hundred criminals ; restoring them, honest and well-doing men, to the bosom of society. What life-boat, pulled by strong hands through roaring breakers to sinking ship and drowning men, ever made a rescue like that ? Yet that was the work of a man in humble life ; without name, or influence, or rank, or more than ordinary talents ; but with love to men such as burned in the heart that was pierced and broken on the Cross of Calvary. Now, before he dies, let every Christian go down, as it were, to the shore to pluck the drowning from the flood—in some poor sinner whom he is blessed to save, let him find at least one gem to shine and sparkle in his heavenly crown.

Here, ingratitude may be the chief return the large and loving-hearted meet for their labors of love ; but be assured that though man forgets you, your Master will not. It is they who glorify God, who shall enjoy Him ; they who deny themselves, who shall not be denied ; they who labor on earth, who shall rest in heaven ; they who bear the cross, who shall wear the crown ; they who seek to bless others, who shall be blessed ; nor is there a prayer you offer, one good word you drop, a work of mercy you undertake, a tear you shed for sinners, a loaf you carry to a poor man's door, a cup of water, even a kind look given to human sorrow, that shall be forgotten. All are recorded in the Chronicles of the Kingdom, and shall be acknowledged in the presence of an assembled universe, when, unnoticed and unknown no longer,

you bend your head for the blood-bought crown, and Christ, as He places it on immortal brows, says, Thus it shall be done to the man whom the King delighteth to honor! That day will show that the true way for a man to live was not to live to himself but to others ; that, paradox as it sounds, the way for a man never to be forgotten is to forget himself. He will be no loser by that. The sun is not less resplendent, for all the light he sheds when he sinks in the golden west ; nor the sea, when she roars along the shore, less full, for all the showers she gives ; nor the rose, the lily, or the jessamine less fragrant, for all the odors they fling on the passing breeze ; nor the earth leaner, but fatter, for the cattle that tread its pastures, and the harvests that are borne from its field ; and even so it will be found that they who have lived most for others have lived best for themselves. The God whose glory, not their own, they sought, shall not forget to glorify them ; and, rewarding what they did for others as done to Himself, their Judge shall say, "Inasmuch as ye did it to one of the least of them, ye did it unto me." May their character, as thus painted by the poet, be ours !—

Far other aims his heart had learned to prize,
More bent to raise the wretched than to rise.

Thus to relieve the wretched was his pride,
And even his failings leaned to *virtue's* side ;
But in his duty prompt, at every call
He watched and wept, he prayed and felt for all :
And as a bird each fond endearment tries
To tempt its new-fledged offspring to the skies,
He tried each art, reproved each dull delay,
Allured to brighter worlds, and led the way.

Our Chief End—The Glory of God.

"WHEN thou sittest to eat with a ruler, consider diligently what is before thee, and put a knife to thy throat, if thou be a man given to appetite." This passage, in which Solomon, by a startling metaphor, teaches the propriety of self-restraint, illustrates one of the most remarkable features of the Bible—this, namely, that though the conditions of men are infinitely varied, each one may find something appropriate to itself there. Our globe floats in an ocean of air ; and as that, the atmosphere which surrounds it, descends to the bottom of the deepest mine, and also rises to the summit of the highest mountain ; as it covers continents and seas alike ; as, an element of universal life, it is found in all dwellings, and is fitted for men in all variety of conditions ; so is the Word of God. Thus, whether they dwell in a palace or a prison, whether they celebrate a feast or observe a fast, whether they are prosperous or unfortunate in business, whether they hang rejoicing over a cradle or sit weeping by a coffin, whether they enjoy health or lie pining on a bed of sickness, whether they are occupied with the things of this world or of the next, whatever be the relation in which they stand to others,—that of sovereign or subject, parent or child, brother or sister companion or

neighbor, bosom friend or deadly foe,—there are none but will find something in the Bible written for them, and for their case.

While spreading itself thus over the whole surface of society, and directing us in the vast variety of cases which society offers, this book in some instances presents remarkable illustrations of the adage “much in little.” Like a river which, flowing in a broad and spacious bed, contracts its limits, and collects its waters to pour them through a rocky channel not broader than a brave man could leap, the Bible gathers up all its directions to men in all manner of circumstances to present them in one short, single, comprehensive sentence. For instance, the duties we owe to God and to our neighbors, which fill so many of its chapters and have filled so many volumes of divinity, it gathers up into this short saying, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbor as thyself.” On these, says our Lord, hang all the law and the prophets. Enunciating the motives from which our conduct should spring, these condense into one sentence the whole duty of man. With a condensation no less remarkable, and an application equally broad, the Apostle Paul enunciates, not the motives but the object of our conduct, not the feelings that should move us, but the end we should move to, in this single but equally memorable sentence, “Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all ~~to~~ the glory of God.”

This is the End for which we should live; and what a noble end this, compared with the mean.

base, paltry, selfish, sinful objects for which so many live! Let a domestic who kindles a fire or sweeps a floor, do so for God's glory, let her go about her meanest avocations with a desire to honor the God she serves and the religion she professes ; like the lark that from its lowly nest ascends on quivering wing to fill the blue sky over him with a flood of melody, let a ploughman, rising to this object, draw his furrow and go through his work with a view to God's glory, as well as to his master's interests and his own, and here indeed "the end sanctifies the means;" the secular becomes a sacred, the meanest an exalted and honorable occupation. By this motive we ally ourselves to the angels who sing God's praise and shine to His glory. Rising higher still, we become one with God himself. Our aim is His : He does all things for His own glory. In a sense we live the life and die the death of Him who, praying, "Father, glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee," undertook the work of redemption, and brought to light in the latent attribute of Mercy the brightest jewel of His Father's crown.

A grand End to live for, how many are the strong yet most tender, the common yet most sacred ties, that bind us to it, it were impossible to tell. We have more reason for living to God's glory than any angel has. He made us, He has preserved our fragile life, He has provided for our daily wants. But to man He has been merciful and gracious, besides being abundant in goodness and in truth—having borne with us, and pitied us, and spared us, and loved us, and, not sparing His

own Son, redeemed us, and by His gracious Spirit called us out of darkness into His marvellous light. And so the warmest love to God should burn in human bosoms ; and in the heavenly choir the highest notes should be sung, not by angels, but by those whom Jesus has redeemed to God by His blood out of every kindred, and nation, and people, and tongue. In taking our nature into union with His own, God conferred the rarest and highest honor on humanity ; nor, since He redeemed men with the blood of His Son, do the highest angels wear crowns so bright as the thief of the cross, or the woman that was a sinner. As in the families of men the youngest child is seated by day next to its father, and lies closest by night to its mother's breast ; or as in the material heavens it is not the largest but the smallest planets that revolve in orbits nearest to the sun ; so in consequence of redeeming love, though in his original position inferior to angels, man occupies in the family of God, and in those heavens of which the visible are but the starry pavement, a place nearest to the throne. And thus by the law that to whom much is given, of them shall much be required, those whom God has most loved are most bound to love, those whom He has most glorified are most bound to glorify Him.

We may regard the glory of God in a wider aspect than in its connection with our pleasure or our duty. There are in nature, ordained of God, laws of limited operation, and others, acting everywhere and on everything, of universal operation. There is no place in the world, for instance—neither on the sea nor its shore, neither at the bottom

of the darkest mine nor on the snowy summit of the loftiest mountain,—where a stone, if dropped from the hand, does not fall, drawn downward by the earth's attraction. Nor is this, which is called the law of gravitation, bounded by earth, her spacious seas or sounding shores. It reaches the utmost limits of creation ; so that the law by which its rattle drops from an infant's hand, or the tear from its cheek, is the very law that rolls the planets in their orbits and fixes the stars in heaven. Now He who appears—so far as science has travelled the realms, and penetrated the mysteries, of creation—to have made all matter, worlds equally with grains of sand, suns of light equally with drops of rain, celestial equally with terrestrial things subject to the imperial law of gravitation, with a sweep more universal still, because embracing both the spiritual and the material universe, has made all things for His own glory. Insects as well as angels, the flowers that spangle the meadow as well as the stars that spangle the sky, the lamp of the glow-worm as well as the light of the sun, the lark that sings in the air and the saint that is singing in Paradise, the still small voice of conscience as well as the thunders that rend the clouds, or the trump that shall rend the tomb,—these and all things else manifest God's attributes and proclaim His praise. They glorify Him ; and for that end—the loftiest that God, angel, or man can aim at—they were made. As is said in Scripture, “The Lord hath made all things for himself : yea, even the wicked for the day of evil.”

There is a sense indeed in which we, puny creatures whom He could crush before the moth,

may defeat God in this object, may defraud Him of His due. “Will a man rob God?” is the question He himself puts; and, speaking to the Jews, answers thus: “Ye hath robbed me of tithes and offerings.” But while, to use His own strong language, men may rob God of the love, service, time, and talents which are His due, of His glory they can no more rob Him than they can pluck from His hand the sceptre, or from His brows the crown, of the universe. For though the atheist denies His existence,—the fool saying in his heart, “There is no God;” and the infidel His Word,—spurning it as an old superstition or cunningly-devised fable; and others, less bold but equally undutiful, like Simon Magus who sought the Holy Ghost to make money of his gifts, may profess for worldly ends to serve Him, while in reality, the slaves of vicious passions, they serve His enemy, the devil, how abortive are all their efforts to rob Him of His glory? “He that sits in heaven laughs, the Lord holds them in derision;” making the ungodly passions and very wrath of man so to praise Him, that they who will not glorify Him with the services of earth and on the harps of heaven, shall be compelled, as objects of His righteous indignation, to glorify Him in the fires of hell. Not that He wishes it so. God is not willing that any should perish. Not that He has any pleasure in the death even of the wicked. Not but that He would have all men to come and be saved. He spared not His Son that He might spare us. But He will have His glory out of all men. Let men, therefore, “kiss the Son lest he be angry, and they perish from the way.” “Every tree that bringeth not forth good

fruit, shall be cut down and cast into the fire ;" nor will God be defrauded of His glory. The tree that is not good for fruit shall be found good for fuel.

For example, Pharaoh had no intention whatever of serving God and promoting His glory. Nothing was further from his thoughts ; as appears from the insolent and defiant tone of his answer to the message conveyed to him from God by Moses and Aaron : "Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, Let my people go !" "Who is the Lord that I should obey his voice to let Israel go ? I know not the Lord, neither will I let Israel go !" Thus, the proud king of Egypt throws down the gage of battle ; and daring the God of Israel to do His worst, puts the people under a more grievous and grinding bondage. Yet see how God took His glory out of this man ; making Egypt a theatre on which to display His sovereign and almighty power in a series of unparalleled and stupendous miracles ! Moses throws his rod on the palace floor ; and as soon as the straight, dry, dead wood touches the ground, it turns, and twists, and hisses, and rears its crest, a living serpent,—putting the astonished courtiers to sudden flight. He stretches it on the river—and all the waters of Egypt change into blood ; the goblet with its loathsome draught drops from the hands of the thirsty ; and the Nile rolls its red flood from shore to shore onward to the sea, crimsoning her foaming waves. He raises it ; and loud thunders rend the sky, nor cease till there is neither standing tree nor living beast in the fertile fields of Egypt—all lie crushed and killed by balls of fire and tremendous bolts of ice. Miracle succeeds miracle ; each fit of Pharaoh's

obstinacy affording God an opportunity of glorifying Himself through one who refused to glorify Him. Nor was the last of these judgments the least remarkable. For though it was to his own destruction, it was eminently to God's glory that Pharaoh, seeing the sea open its gates to let Israel go, rushed down into the deep, lashing his horses like a madman. And when Moses, standing against the morning skyline on a rock of the other shore, again stretched out his rod, the parted waters, obedient to the signal, rushed together, to roar and foam in one wild tumultuous sea over the banners and chariots, the pride and hosts of Egypt. The sea has moaned over many a wreck, but never made one like that, over which her avenging waves go rejoicing ; and never did any man she flung on her shore less intend to glorify God than he over whom, and the drowned host the waves floated to their feet, Moses and the whole congregation sang, “I will sing unto the Lord, for he has triumphed gloriously : the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea. Thy right hand, O Lord, is glorious in power : thy right hand hath dashed in pieces the enemy ; thou didst blow with thy wind, the sea covered them : they sank as lead in the mighty waters. Who is like unto thee among the gods ? who is like thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders ? Sing ye to the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously ; the horse and its rider hath he thrown into the sea !”

But let us confine our attention to the glory of God as the end for which we should be willing, and should be happy, to live. Without entering into the merits of the different catechisms used by

Protestant Churches, all will admit that none open with an introduction more grand than that of the Westminster Divines. Whatever judgment may be formed of the building itself, no porch or vestibule, no introduction could exceed in loftiness and grandeur the manner in which it opens—with this question, namely, and its appropriate answer, “What is the chief end of man?”—“The chief end of man is to glorify God, and enjoy him for ever.” With that, like the catechism, our life should open, and should also close; the glory of God, and not our own, being the end we ought to have in view in all its plans and purposes, its actions and arrangements. And it may serve to illustrate the subject, and also promote a good practical end, to consider here the case which St. Paul puts, namely that of eating and drinking to the glory of God.

Now I remark that we eat and drink to this end when we share our food with the needy. It were not to glorify God, it were not to be like the children of our Father in heaven, it were not to recommend religion in the eyes of the world, it were not to adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour, it were not to be like Jesus Christ, for Christians to pamper their appetite and indulge their love of a luxurious table to the loss of those who suffer want, and are ready to perish. I refer not only to times of public calamity, of high prices and low wages, of scant harvests and stern winters, of such destruction of crops as some years ago sent our Highlanders to their stormy shores to pluck the tangle and gather shells for food, and turned Ireland into a Hadadrimmom, or valley of weeping.

At all times and everywhere, but especially in our crowded cities, there are families sorely pinched for the common necessaries of life ; people who struggle for existence, and find it hard to feed the hungry mouths of children, or keep body and soul together. In many cases, perhaps, their vices have reduced them to this misery ; and it is sometimes a serious and difficult question whether, and how far, charity should interpose between crime and its consequences. God has wisely ordained suffering to be the penalty of sin, and appointed pain the guardian of virtue as well as of life. Were it otherwise, were the indolent to enjoy the same advantages as the industrious, were vice as conducive to health and wealth and pleasure as virtue, this world would not be fit to live in. Therefore, however painful it may be to refuse relief and pass by the sufferer, as if our hearts, instead of bleeding for them, were as hard as stone, our **duty** in certain cases and to some extent may require us to allow men, by reaping as they have sowed, to learn that “the way of transgressors is hard.” But God makes his sun to shine upon the evil and the good ; and we are to be the children of our Father in heaven, which we cannot be,—blessing others, the many who suffer want in this world and no blame to them, poor children, the fatherless, and the stranger,—unless in the very matter of our tables and of ministering to our appetites we have respect to God’s glory. Were there no waste on the part of some, how much less want would there be on the part of others ? If Dives had not fared sumptuously, Lazarus had fared comfortably, every day. The waste that goes on in many houses, the

luxuries under which tables groan and health suffers, would supply the wants, and diffuse contentment through the homes, of thousands ; and they only who, thinking that there is room and bread enough at their Father's table for them and others, make room for these, and from their own superfluity supply their neighbor's plate and fill his cup, eat to God's glory ; glorify God at the table in eating, as well as in the temple in worshipping ; and breathe the spirit of Him, our Divine Pattern, who, when the fare was but barley loaves and fishes, said, "Gather up the fragments, that nothing may be lost !"

I remark again, we eat and drink to God's glory when we abstain from excess—from the gluttony that, on the one hand, makes man a beast and the drunkenness that, on the other hand, makes him a devil. The last, as a national, at least our most prevailing sin, has the chief claim on our notice. The evils of intemperance we would not have cause to lament, and be ashamed of; it would not be the blot of our country and the disgrace of our Churches, the curse of so many families and the "skeleton" in so many houses, were God's glory our end in eating and in drinking, as in all things else. But such wide-spread desolation has this hideous vice wrought on the peace and prosperity of families, on the bodies and souls of those for whom Jesus died, that many, who do not go the length of saying that there is sin in the use of stimulants, go the length (and I am not ashamed to confess myself one of the number) of saying that these do so much more ill than good, are so dangerous to all and so deadly to many, that for

security against their abuse, it is best, unless as medicines, to abstain from their use. A matter this to which the apostolic rule applies, "Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind."

I know that great errors have been propagated, and even great crimes committed, from mistaken views of what was for the glory of God. For that end, Saul of Tarsus—as many bloody bigots have done since then—persecuted the Church of God, and was so exceedingly mad against Christ's people that his very name struck terror into their hearts. In shedding Stephen's blood, and breathing forth slaughters, this Jew thought he did God service. He aimed at God's glory; but by how great a distance did he miss the mark? People, I admit, may be as far wrong as Saul, or even Jehu, when pursuing his selfish and ambitious ends, he reined in his fiery steeds and invited the prophet to share his chariot, saying, "Come, see my zeal for the Lord." But though it may sometimes be doubtful whether a sober man is on the way to heaven, there is, and can be, no doubt that a drunkard is on the way to hell. It may be a question with a humble, downcast, trembling believer, seated at the Lord's table, whether, when he raises the wine cup of communion to his lips, he is drinking to the glory of God; but there can be no question that God is not glorified, but dishonored, by the cup which turns man's heart to stone and his head to madness,—which destroys his reason, and damns his soul. No drunkard, says the Bible, "shall inherit the kingdom of God."

All who love God and their fellow-creatures,

who are animated with a spark of the love which brought our blessed Saviour to this world and the cross, should, as pre-eminently one grand way of living to the glory of God, conspire together to check, and, were that possible, to extinguish and trample out this terrible vice. It may be said of its evils, their name is *legion*. For one God's providence makes poor, drunkenness reduces a thousand to poverty ; for one born without reason, it deprives thousands of reason ; for one sober man who commits suicide, by the accidents which it produces and the diseases which it generates, it sends thousands by their own hands to an untimely grave ; and in broken-hearted wives and starving children kills many more than the murderers who fall on scaffolds—than battles that reddens earth's soil with soldiers' blood. It is calculated that, by its direct or indirect influence, drunkenness costs this country, year by year, of lives not less than sixty thousand, and of money not less than sixty millions—a sum greater by twenty times than all this Christian nation contributes for the purposes of education, for the maintenance and propagation of the Gospel. Is this to eat and drink to the glory of God ? Alas ! it becomes us to exclaim with Ezra, "I blush, and am ashamed to lift up my head." May God give us grace to amend our ways and doings, as those whom Christ charges with the care of His own sacred cause and of His Father's glory !

It was a precious legacy Jesus bestowed on John, the best-loved of the disciples, in His mother. Before His conception, Gabriel, leaving the throne of God, winged his way down to Mary's door, to

astonish the humble virgin, not more by his appearance than by this strange address—"Hail, thou that art highly favored! the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women." After His conception, but before His birth, her cousin, whom she had gone to visit, received Mary as if she had been a queen—"Blessed," cried Elizabeth, as she gazed on her face, perhaps bent lowly at her feet, "blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb. And whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?" After His birth, the aged Simeon stood on the verge of another world, and holding the blessed babe in his withered arms, poured forth a strain equally inspired in its heavenly source and lofty in its glorious import; only that it closed with words of ominous meaning. A sword is to pierce the mother's soul. What sword? Long a mystery to Mary, the hour has come that it ceases to be so. It is now unsheathed, glittering before her dazzled eyes, buried in her quivering heart. Jesus, her Son, is hanging on the bloody tree, and dies amid the scorn of man, and to appearance under the wrath of God. The sword is piercing her soul. Jesus sees it; and all the son is moved within Him. Pattern to the children of men, He forgets His own sorrows in His mother's; and, turning His eye from her fainting form to fix it on John, He commits her to the tenderest, kindest, and best-loved of His disciples, in these touching and most expressive words—"Behold thy mother!" A precious charge indeed! What danger was not John ready to face, what sacrifices to submit to, what self-denial and hardship to endure, that he might supply the

wants of Mary, and shield a head so honored from the storms and ills of life !

Had this legacy been bequeathed to us from the cross where He hung, bleeding to save us, had Jesus with dying look and voice committed His mother to our charge, He had not committed to us a trust more precious than we have. Christians have, indeed, a still greater, dearer charge. I speak not of pastors, to whom Christ says, " Feed my sheep, feed my lambs,"—of those, the ministers of the Gospel, to whose care, in souls purchased by His dying blood, He has committed

Treasures greater far
Than east or west unfold ;—

nor of parents, to whom, as He commits in each child an immortal spirit to their guardian arms, He says, in the words of Pharaoh's daughter, " Nurse this child for me !" Not to one and another, not to this or that class, but to all His people, without distinction of age, office, or rank, He has committed the sacred cause of His own and of His Father's glory. How great the responsibility, how weighty, as well as how honorable, the charge of the humblest Christian ! And since according to the tenor of his life God will be honored, or dis-honored ; since the divine glory will thereby be either promoted, or hindered ; since sinners will thereby be either drawn to religion, or driven from it ; since the hands of ministers will thereby be either strengthened, or weakened ; and since in God's providence souls will thereby be either lost or saved, and the Christian himself become to others either the savor of death unto death, or

the savor of life unto life—how should God's people feel the solemnity and awfulness of their position? Let them put forth their utmost efforts, and put up their most earnest prayers, that they may make their light so to shine before men that God may be glorified—that others may see their good works, and glorify their Father which is in heaven

Our Chief End—The Good of Man.

I HAVE somewhere read the story of a man—if he was worthy of the name—who, though possessing large stores of food, kept them concealed amid the horrors of a famine; shut up while hundreds of unhappy creatures were perishing at his door. He heard the wail of children crying for bread when their mothers had none to give them; he heard the loud clamor of the maddened multitude; he saw women with infants on their withered bosoms fall fainting in the street; he saw gaunt and famished men fiercely fighting over a bone, like hungry dogs; and while to such as in sepulchral tones, with hollow eye and sunken cheek, implored his pity, he replied, “Alas! I have nothing to bestow,” this wretch was calculating the wealth—the cursed, filthy lucre—he would gain by opening his stores when prices and the famine were at their highest. His crime against humanity, not to say religion, was terrible; and not less terrible its punishment—the wages of his sin, death in a most appalling form. In some way or other, the secret of his well-stocked granaries and cruel selfishness became known; and instead of rushing for food, famishing as they were, the people rose, as one man, for vengeance—forgetting their hunger to wreak their fury on this monster.

Their first impulse was to tear him in pieces ; limb from limb. They took a calmer, deeper, more terrible revenge. He had refused them bread. They would place him where there was bread enough and to spare—not however, to gratify his eyes and appetite, to appease the pangs of hunger, and, returning good for evil, illustrate the blessed rule, “If thine enemy hunger, feed him ; if he thirst, give him drink ; and in so doing thou wilt heap coals of fire upon his head.” Having carried him to one of his own storehouses, with food in abundance on every side, within an inch of his fingers stretched to the full, there they left him, nailed to the floor—bread, bread everywhere, but not a bit to eat—dooming him to pine away amid unavailing cries, and die of famine in the midst of plenty. A tragedy indeed!—and a terrible illustration of the law of nature, and what to a certain extent is also the law of every human government, this, namely, an eye for an eye ; a tooth for a tooth ; hunger for hunger ; and life for life.

This man’s crime may have deserved severe punishment at the hands of society. I do not say it did not, for in such circumstances who would listen to the plea, Have not I a right to do what I will with my own ? But without entering on that point, and to deal with the case simply on the principles of Christianity, what course would she have dictated ? Not certainly that, nor any such terrible and tragic revenge. No other course, indeed, but such as Jesus Christ, her Founder and our Pattern, would Himself have taken. If any man, He says, would be my disciple, let him take up his

cross, deny himself daily, and follow me ; a rule which resolves itself into this—Speak as Christ, had He been in our circumstances, would have spoken ; feel as He would have felt ; act as He would have acted. Now, had Nazareth in his day been the town where this famine raged, and where with others He and Mary had seen neighbors die of want, and had themselves felt the pinch of hunger, does any one suppose that when the wild mob, yelling for vengeance, rushed along the street to wreak it on the author of their calamities, that Jesus would have thrown Himself into the throng—to head them, or even as a mere spectator of such vengeance, to stand by, and, without a look of pity or a word of remonstrance, see the wretched man fastened to the floor in sight but out of reach of bread ? When I fancy Nazareth the place of such sufferings and such a tragedy, I fancy that I see Him leave His workshop, and hurry to the scene. Though foreseeing the time when He Himself shall be condemned to a death as cruel, and not one voice to say, Crucify Him not, yet in my fancy He presses to the front to place Himself between the clamorous, famished, frantic, furious multitude and the pale crouching, trembling, speechless victim of their vengeance ; and there to my eye, calm and majestic as He stood one night amid the raging waves of Galilee, He rebukes the murderous passions of the multitude, saying, Peace, be still—Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord. Weeping the loss of Lazarus, Mary's first words to Jesus were, Lord, if Thou hadst been here, my brother had not died : nor had that man had Christ been there—or Christianity been there. For though nature,

fallen and unrenewed nature, hates her enemies, and, thirsting for vengeance, would drag them from the horns of the altar, Christianity embraces the bitterest foe in the arms of brotherhood. Present in a scene where there were ample stores and a man, wretch and monster though he was, famishing of hunger, she would have lifted in her hand the cross radiant with the love of God and red with the blood of Him who came not to kill His enemies but be killed for them, to ask, as she protested against this terrible retaliation, "Whoso hath this world's goods, and seeth his brother in need, and shutteth his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?"

Besides the glory of God, another grand End for which we should live, as this, and many other passages, and I may say all Scripture, teaches, is the good of others. An end this which we shall be the better able to keep in view, and reach, by forming a correct and sufficiently large idea of what is meant by the term *brother*, as employed by our Lord and His apostles. Now, when our Lord was, on one occasion, addressing the people, some hearer on the outskirts of the crowd interrupted Him, to say, "Behold thy mother and thy brethren stand without, desiring to speak with thee!" As when the lilies bloomed at His feet; or a little bird, free of care, sat sweetly singing on a bending spray; or a sower, girt with sheet, paced the furrows of a neighboring field, flinging the corn broadcast from his hand; or the valley stood below, with two houses by its brawling stream, one a ruin on a bank of sand, the other weather-beaten and

gray with age, yet firmly planted on a rock whose sides the flood was vainly chafing—so here our Lord seized the opportunity this interruption offered to teach an important truth. To the man's appeal and the people's astonishment, Jesus returns this memorable answer, “Who is my mother, and who are my brethren?” adding, as He stretches forth His hand and points to His disciples, “Behold my mother and my brethren; for whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother!” Was our Lord a stranger to filial or fraternal affection that He spoke what seems to slight the dearest relationships; and on another occasion, addressed His mother not by that endearing term, but irreverent and unrespectful-like, said, Woman, my hour is not yet come? By no means—as His life's last, dark closing hours bear witness. It is said that the ruling passion is strong in death—hence the dying scholar has been heard muttering classic odes in place of David's psalms; hence the old soldier has fancied himself once more on the field of battle, and put forth his remaining strength, ere he sank back in death on his pillow, to raise a feeble arm, and wave a swordless hand, and, startling the onlookers, thunder out the charge; and hence also when death had struck him from the helm, the last words of the statesman, ere he sank, have been of the fortunes of his country. And if the ruling passion be strong in death, I am willing that our Lord should be judged by this test. When that alabaster box was broken, what precious spikenard breathed forth to fill the Church and world with its fragrance? Judged by this test, never mother

had a more tender son than our Lord ; His last, loving, living looks were turned on Mary, and He would seem amid the agony of the cross, to have forgotten His own sufferings in sympathy with hers.

Understood aright, our Lord's words do not weaken our household ties. Their purpose was not to under-value the relationships of nature, but to exalt and magnify those of grace ; to teach us that Jesus Christ regards the humblest, poorest, feeblest saint as a brother or a sister—more still, as dear to His heart, as His own mother. And this relationship which, by faith, unites Him and His believing people in such close and tender and holy fellowship, so unites them to each other that in whatever circumstances they meet, by signs secret to the uninitiated and outer world, they recognize in each other the character and the claims of brethren. His skin may have a hue different from mine ; bred for the market, he may be bought and sold like a cattle-beast ; he may be marked with the brand, loaded with the fetters, lashed with the whip, crushed with the sufferings of a slave ; but if, with faith in Jesus, he lift his manacled hands and streaming eyes to that heaven where bondsmen are free, and, robed and throned, they stand before the throne of God, and share in the glory of His Son, slave though he be, sold though he be, trodden in the dust though he be, he and I are brothers. With the same God for our Father, the same Saviour for our Elder Brother, the same Spirit for our heavenly Comforter, one cross for the anchor of our hope, one Bible for our guide-book, one heaven for our everlasting home, the Gospel tells

me to knock off a brother's fetters,—to loose him and let him go. No tie is so endearing and enduring as that of a common love to Christ: and so by that I may be bound in closer fellowship to a man living in the other end of the world than to my next-door neighbor, to foreigners than to fellow-countrymen, to the black man than to his white proprietor and cruel oppressor. And thus, in yonder fields, where the negro man bleeds under his master's lash, or the negro mother weeps, vainly seeking to protect a daughter from brutal violence, I may witness the scene that set Moses on fire, when he saw an Egyptian smiting a Hebrew, and, smiting the Egyptian, buried him in the sand. Hence in living not only for the glory of God, but for the good of others, we are, because they are brethren in Christ, to regard those who are of the household of the faith as having the first claim on our attention and sympathy, on our help and charity, on our prayers and pity. Who hurts them hurts, and who helps them helps, Christ Himself. Inasmuch, He says, as ye did it unto one of the least of these, ye did it unto me!

But though the people and saints of God have the first, they have by no means the only claim on our good offices. All mankind are bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh. Unhappily buried with us in the ruins of the fall, but also mercifully embraced in the covenant of salvation, those against whom equally with us Justice closed the gates of Eden, but to whom equally with us Mercy opened the door of heaven, the lowest savage that roams his forest may address us saying, "Am not I a brother?" nay, the vilest creature that nightly

prowls the street for prey, “Am not I a sister?” And—for piety toward God is the true parent of pity toward man—if imbued with the love and spirit of Jesus, the sight of a fellow-creature suffering, and by the mouth of every wound imploring help, transforms me into a good Samaritan. Nature as well as grace, has her claims; and they most adorn the doctrine of God their Saviour whose benevolence, irrespective of creed, color, country, or even character, rises like the sun, and falls like the sunshine upon all. When a French frigate pierced by our well-directed, crashing shot, settled down into the sea and left her survivors to struggle with death among the waves, it gave occasion to one of those heroic incidents that shed a gleam of light on the horrors of war. The men who had sunk her, and had other ships yet to fight, threw themselves into their boats; and, heedless of the battle that thundered over and the shot that fell around them, pulled for the drowning, and with the very arms that had wrought the deadly guns plucked their enemies from a watery grave. Nature made her voice heard above the roar of cannon. What was it to our rough but kindly seamen that the head they pulled for belonged to a foe, and a Frenchman? Frenchman and foe, it was a fellow-creature perishing. And in the presence of such a spectacle we should blush for the Christianity of a man who, with the sight of suffering before his eyes and the power to relieve it in his hands, leaves any fellow-creature to suffer; passing by on the other side. He may be robed in the habits of a priest, he may fill the office of a Levite, but with God’s showers and sunshine falling alike on the evil and

good, and with God's Son hung on the bloody cross for the chief of sinners, to such a man I may well apply the question, "How dwelleth the love of God in him?"

Now, the wants and woes of the world present abundant opportunities of living for the good of others. Speaking only of the poor, The poor, said our Lord, ye have always with you ; and, apart from the numerous, too numerous cases of poverty that result from vice or improvidence, many have a hard struggle to live—to keep body and soul together. I have known some come to church on Sabbath without having broken their fast ; I have known mothers sing their infants asleep that they might forget their hunger in its sweet oblivion ; I have found old age shivering by a cold, black hearth ; I have seen an emaciated form lift its skinny arm and shake its thin gray locks to say, when I spoke of Jesus, "I am cold and hungry, nor can think of aught else." This was sad : but, alas ! many from year's end to year's end, especially in the dark squalid quarters of large cities, have a constant struggle for the bare necessities of life. Objects of sympathy more than of censure, they are sorely tempted to forget the great question, "What shall I do to be saved ?" in these—suggested by hunger, squalid rags, and empty cupboards—"What shall I eat ? what shall I drink ? wherewithal shall I be clothed ?" To relieve such poverty alleviates suffering ; but more, and in the light of eternity better still, rolls away the stone that shuts up the grave of a soul, and stands, like that at the mouth of Lazarus's tomb, between the living and dead. Nor, as I have seen with my

own eyes in these abodes, is bread that perisheth the only, or the greatest want. How many Bibles stand in pawnbrokers' windows?—they who for bread have parted with the Word of Life, excusing themselves almost in the language of Esau, when, addressing one who took unbrotherly advantage of his wants to buy his birthright for a mess of pottage, the hungry hunter said, “Behold, I am at the point to die, and what profit shall this birthright be to me?”

But thousands, millions of our fellow-creatures present us with opportunities of living for their good in matters of yet higher moment. In heathen, in some so-called Christian lands, what multitudes are perishing for want of the Word and Bread of Life? Nor is their case the better, but the worse, that they are insensible to their needs—unlike the hungry man who works for bread, begs for it, will even steal for it, ay, sometimes murder for it. Their miseries, if not their mouths cry, Come over and help us! And with our prayers contributing our money in the shape of Bibles and of teachers, in answer to this appeal, ready, while we sit at home at ease, to encounter all dangers, and even death itself,—we should be happy, had we millions, to spend them in a cause for which the Son of God spent His life, and poured out His life's blood on Calvary.

Now in aiming at the good of others as one grand end of life, we are to pursue it in an unselfish, generous, brotherly way,—allowing our benevolence neither to be tied down by the conventional rules of the world, nor tainted by its commercial spirit. Our Lord puts this strongly, or rather most

strikingly, where He says, "When thou makest a feast, or a supper, call not thy friends, nor thy brethren, nor thy kinsmen, nor thy rich neighbors, lest they also bid thee again, and a recompense be made thee: but when thou makest a feast call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind, and thou shalt be blessed; for they cannot recompense thee, for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just." But who ever saw such a feast? The poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind,—these we receive at the door where they knock with timid hand, and, in some small coin, in bread, or broken victuals, receive their alms. But who invites them further; ushers them in; receives them as welcome guests into the house, where, treated with frank, respectful kindness, they find a seat at his table, and servants to stand at their back?

No doubt the Church of Rome, as children play at feasts or mimic fights, plays at this thing. I have seen the Pope, a mere play-actor, entertaining pilgrims at his table, where, divested of triple crown and gorgeous robes, he gave each with his own jewelled hand a piece of bread and a cup of wine. The ceremony is performed once a year, and is nothing but a drama—the time, Holy Week; the stage, St. Peter's; the actors, the Pope and pilgrims; and the spectators a brilliant assembly—monarchs, princes, cardinals, priests of all ranks, monks of all colors, and a swaying, fashionable crowd met to see him who claims the right to put his foot on the neck of kings, go through a mockery of Christian lowliness and hospitality. But, while the Pope may be said to carry out our Lord's instructions in empty mockery, who does it in

reality? Who would, would astonish society more than by a crime. Let a man invite such guests to dinner, and how people would stop, and stare, and gape with wonder at the stream of poverty creeping along and pouring in at his open door—the lame hobbling on crutches, the blind led by dog or little child, the widow clad in rusty weeds, the poor outcast with rags on her back and at her bosom a shrivelled infant, children, shivering and shoeless, from streets their haunt by day, from dingy dens and cellars their cold homes by night! Not wondered at only, and supposed by many to be mad, the man who dare do this, who would render a literal obedience to Christ's command, might prepare for no measured censure—people saying, this was to turn the world upside down; to spoil the poor; to inflate them with notions unbefitting their condition; to destroy the lines of demarcation which God in His providence had drawn between the different classes of society. What a talk such a feast would make!—how many, more ready to tread the poor down in the dust than raise them out of it, would condemn it as a piece of mischievous ostentation, the empty parade of charity!

Nevertheless, why should it not be tried? It is said of the excellent Lord Chief Justice Hale, that he frequently invited his poor neighbors to dinner, and made them sit at table with himself. If any of them were sick, so that they could not come, he would send provisions to them warm from his own table. He did not confine his bounties to the poor of his own parish, but diffused supplies to the neighboring parishes as occasion required. He always treated the old, the needy, and the sick,

with the tenderness and familiarity that became one who considered they were of the same nature with himself, and were reduced to no other necessities but such as he himself might be brought to. Common beggars he considered in another view. If any of these met him in his walks, or came to his door, he would ask such as were capable of working why they went about so idly? If they answered that it was because they could not get employment, he would send them to some field, to gather all the stones in it, and lay them in a heap; and then paid them liberally for their trouble. This being done, he used to send his carts, and cause the stones to be carried to such places of the highway as needed repair.

As to turning the world upside down, that charge was brought against the apostles; and, as were true of a pyramid pitched by earthquake or other convulsion of nature on its apex, the world, which sin has set wrong, will never be right till things are turned upside down—till Eternity takes the place of time, the soul of the body, the Saviour of sin, self-denial of self-indulgence, and the despised and neglected poor are treated as brothers—neighbours whom we are to love as we love ourselves, or rather whom we are to love as Christ loved us.

Then again as to ostentation, while all care should be taken that our good is not evil-spoken of, we are not to cease to do good because it may be so. Conscious that it is only sovereign grace which makes them differ from others, none are less likely to make a parade of their good works than God's people. Indeed, I have known some of these run into the opposite extreme—forgetting that the

light which flashes over the sea from lighthouse tower on rugged headland or sunken rock, is not kindled to be hid, but seen. A candle, as our Lord says, is set on a candlestick, not under a bushel. that it may light the house ; and, however singular our conduct may appear to the world, or whatever occasion it may afford scoffers to sneer, the Christian should never allow himself to be deterred from obeying his Master's behests, following in his Leader's steps, and so making his light to shine that, not he, but his Father in heaven, may be glorified.

It would certainly look singular, while others dole out their charity at the door, or send it by servants or societies to the homes of the poor, were we to invite them into ours. But one of the characteristics of disciples is, that they are a *peculiar* people, and Jesus, be it remembered, taught His followers that they ought to do many things not done by others—saying, “What do ye more than others?” “Except your righteousness exceed that of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven.” By all means avoid whatever could countenance vice or encourage improvidence ; but let there be more interchange of personal kindness between the rich and poor. I am sure that the sight of worn-out labor, sad and humble widowhood, helpless orphans, and such objects, victims of poverty and objects of pity, as our Lord recommends, sitting all happy at our table, with gratitude burning in their hearts and beaming in their faces, would afford us a purer satisfaction than the highest company we ever entertained. Verily we should have our reward.

True, it may be said, we do this, but after another fashion—through workhouses, hospitals, houses of refuge, asylums, ragged schools, and other such benevolent institutions. Yet these, which form part of the debt the world owes to Christianity, are but an imperfect method of expressing the love which she inculcates, of doing in fullest measure good to others. This object cannot be accomplished but by the direct intercourse of personal visits—those we pay to the poor in their dwellings, or, as our Lord recommends, those they pay to us in ours. It is less the amount given than the way of giving it, that sweetens the cup of poverty and reconciles the pensioners of our bounty to their lot. There are delicate perfumes that owe their fragrance to elements so volatile and ethereal, that much of their virtue is lost when they are poured from one vessel to another. So it is with charity, the pleasure it yields, and the gratitude it awakens. Those kind looks and tones which bespeak the feelings of the heart, you cannot transmit with the goods or gold, the meat or messages, which you send through the medium of servants or societies, or any second party whatever. As far as possible, therefore, every one should be the almoner of his own charities, and carry the sunbeams of his presence into the homes of the poor.

Let me remark further, that I fear we have not faith enough in the literal sense of many of our Lord's injunctions, as is touchingly illustrated by the following fact: Two boys, brothers, had fallen out, and in the heat and whirlwind of his passion the elder struck the younger on the cheek. Brave as steel and quick as lightning the other raised his

arm to return the blow ; but ere it fell, he remembered how he had read that morning by his mother's knee these words, " When one smites thee on the one cheek, turn to him the other also." No sophist, but a simple child who took Christ's words in their plain and ordinary sense, he drops his arm, and turning on his brother eyes where tears of forgiveness had quenched the flash of anger, he offered the other cheek for a second blow. It was the other's turn to weep now. Surprised, subdued, melted, he fell on his brother's neck ; and, kissing him, acknowledged his offence and implored forgiveness. And there, locked in fond embraces, the two boys stood a living proof of this, that our Lord's highest and apparently most impracticable injunctions admit of a more literal obedience than any give them, and than any almost suppose it possible to give them.

Our Lord himself teaches us by His own example how we are to live for others, and reach this one grand end of life. He laid down His life for us, nor are we to shrink from doing the same for others. The world has made her boast of men who, for suffering kindred and bleeding country, have risked and even lost their lives. And indeed there are few worthy of the name of men who, did they see a fellow-creature sending forth wild shrieks and stretching out suppliant hands from the window of a blazing house, would not shake off such as sought to detain them, and bursting open the door, rush in to save another's life at the peril of their own. And when the ship, hurled by a tempest on the foaming reef, lies off shore with the waves sweeping her deck, and her crew, lashed to the masts or hanging

on by the shrouds, implore help in cries heard above the roar of breakers, are not brave men found to volunteer for the rescue, and throw themselves into the life-boat ; risking their own lives to save the lives of others ? But thus to peril life and to lay it down, as he does who takes another's place on the fatal drop, are different, very different things. I will find you a thousand men who will do the first for one you will find to do the second. Yet this is that which the example of Christ may call us to do for the good of others. Hereby, says the apostle, know we the love of God because He laid down His life for us ; not staked it, nor even lost it, but laid it down. And the sacrifice which the good of others may require at our hands, is not only to follow Jesus in those walks where He went about continually doing good, but follow Him when He took His way to Calvary, following Him to death. For the apostle does not conclude that we should part merely with our money, or luxuries, or ease, or comforts for the good of others, but with that which the devil—speaking truth for once—pronounced more precious than them all, saying, Skin for skin, all that a man hath will he give for his life. Because, says the apostle, speaking of our Lord, He laid down His life for us, we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.

Nor is our beneficence, the good we attempt to do to others, to be confined to limits any narrower than God's. It is when we bless them that curse us, and love them that hate us, and pray for them who despitefully use us, that we present the truest image of God, and most clearly prove ourselves to be the children of our Father which is in heaven.

He makes His sun to shine upon the evil and the good, and His rain to fall upon the just and unjust. But not because He could not do otherwise. Such miracles as that which He wrought on the fleece that was saturated with dew when the ground about it was dry, and on the following night lay dry on grass sown with pearls or sparkling with diamonds in the morning sun, He could repeat on all our fields—so turning the face of nature into a broad, patent mirror of His own secret and unsearchable mind, that we could tell, by the barrenness or fertility of a farm, whether its tenant was, or was not, a man of God. As I have seen a gardener play the water of his engine on one tree and turn it away from another, God when He drives His cloudy chariot across the heavens, could so guide its motions and dispense its treasures, as to pour refreshing showers on the fields of one man while those of his neighbor were left to wither and die ; and He could still dispense the sunbeams which ripen our fruits and fill our barns, with a hand as powerful but as partial, as on the day when Goshen lay smiling in sunlight, and the neighboring land of Egypt was palled in darkness that might be felt. But who surveys a smiling valley from the summit of a hill sees all its fields alike robed in verdure or waving with golden harvests—God making no distinction between saints and sinners, but distributing His treasures of shower and sunshine equally to both. And thus in the features of the landscape not less than in the pages of the Bible, in the common providence as well as in the inspired precepts of God, we learn to embrace all men in the arms of Christian affection,

and, without excluding even our bitterest enemies to do them good as we have opportunity. This, the peculiar glory of Christianity and grand lesson of the Cross, shines bright in every sunbeam, and sounds in every falling shower.

Christian Decision.

INVADING armies always endeavor to leave their ships riding in a safe and sheltered anchorage. In the event of their enterprise proving unsuccessful, they thus secure the means of retreat; and to provide for such an emergency is regarded as a good stroke of generalship. Wellington fought Waterloo with the forest of Soigné at his back; and the fleet which carried our soldiers to fight the Russians before Sebastopol waited the issue in the Bay of Balaclava.

The brave old Romans, whom Cæsar led, invaded our country after a different fashion. The first thing they did on disembarking, was to burn their ships; doing so in sight of thousands who were bravely mustering on the heights of England to defend their homes, their wives and little ones, their freedom and native land. Not leaving the enemy to cut off their retreat, they cut it off themselves. Their own hands put the torch to the fleet which had brought them to Britain, and, in the event of failure, would have carried them back to Italy. With the glare of that brave conflagration on their eagles, banners, and serried ranks, we cannot wonder that, with such sons to fight her battles, Rome rose from a petty town to be mistress of the world. Both her destiny and

their determination were to be plainly seen in the blaze of their burning ships. Bringing to the enterprise such an indomitable spirit and such decision of character, unless the stars of heaven fought against them as against Sisera, how could they fail to conquer ?

Such is the resoluteness of mind and purpose the Christian's work requires ; nor without some good measure of that, as well as of the grace and Spirit of God, can it be brought to a successful issue. On engaging in our Father's business—entering on the trials and triumphs of the Christian life, we also are, so to speak, to burn our ships, nor so much as think of retreat. Abandoning for ever any idea of returning to sin, we are to leave no way open but that which, though beset with trials and swarming with foes, leads straight on to heaven—God's language to us being that He held by the Red Sea when He said to Moses, “Why criest thou unto me ? Speak unto the children of Israel that they go forward !”

Decision of character and promptitude of action, qualities so important on board ship in a storm, in the manœuvring of troops in battle, are indispensable to the Christian life—both to our getting through the “strait gate,” and our getting on in the “narrow way.” How often, for example, does it happen that to hesitate even for one moment between resisting and yielding to temptation is to fall ? The battle is lost in that moment of vacillation. In such cases, our safety lies in coming to an immediate decision ; in promptly resolving to dally with the tempter not an instant, to flee if we can, and if we cannot flee to fight—so resisting the

devil that if we cannot flee from him, he shall flee from us, and leave us, as when he spread out his wings and, vanquished at all points, relieved our Lord of his hateful presence, in possession of the field. That we may be conquerors, and more than conquerors, through Him that loved us, our Lord calls for the highest decision of character, warning us against even a recreant thought. No man, He says, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God ; and His apostles use expressions that almost warrant us to say that He opposes our return to the world and sin in a way to recall another grand and very remarkable incident in the history of ancient Rome.

Disheartened by the extraordinary dangers and difficulties of their enterprise, one of her armies lost courage, and resolved on a retreat. The general reasoned with his soldiers. Expostulating with them, he appealed to their love of country, to their honor, and to their oaths. By all that could revive a fainting heart he sought to animate their courage and shake their resolution. Much they trusted, they admired, they loved him, but his appeals were all in vain. They were not to be moved ; and carried away, as by a panic, they faced round to retreat. At that juncture they were forcing a mountain pass ; and had just cleared a gorge where the road, between stupendous rocks on one side and a foaming river on the other, was but a footpath,—broad enough for the step of a single man. As a last resort he laid himself down there, saying, “If you will retreat, it is over this body you go, trampling me to death beneath your

feet." No foot advanced. The flight was arrested. His soldiers could face the foe ; but not mangle beneath their feet one who loved them, and had often led their ranks to victory—sharing like a common soldier all the hardships of the campaign, and ever foremost in the fight. The sight was one to inspire them with decision. Hesitating no longer to advance, they wheeled round to resume their march ; deeming it better to meet sufferings and endure even death itself than trample under foot their devoted and patriot leader. Their hearts recoiled from such an outrage. But for such as have named the name of Christ not to depart from iniquity, for such as have enlisted under His banner to go back to the world, for such as have renounced sin to return to its pleasures, involves a greater crime. A more touching spectacle bars our return. Jesus, as it were, lays Himself down on our path : nor can any become backsliders, and return to the practice and pleasures of sin without treading Him under their feet. These, Paul's very words, call up a spectacle from which every lover of Jesus should recoil with horror : "If he," says that apostle, "who despised Moses' law died without mercy, of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall He be thought worthy who hath *trodden under foot* the Son of God ?"

Decision of character in maintaining our Christian profession, adhering to its principles, and performing its duties, is of such value in our Lord's eyes, that He regards those as His enemies who vacillate between good and evil—hesitating which to choose ; Him or the world. "He," says Jesus, "who is not with me is against me ;" and elsewhere, preferring

open enemies to doubtful friends, He speaks to the same effect—"I would that thou wert either cold or hot ; so then, because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth."

It is not difficult to sympathize with our Lord in this matter. Seeing how a good cause may suffer worse things than opposition, and have to encounter greater dangers than any that come from declared and open enemies, we understand His feelings. If God temper the storm and restrain the remainder of wrath, there are worse things than persecution and opposition. When shepherds, to improve the pastures of the hills and cover them with sweet young grass, set the heather on fire, they choose for that purpose not a calm, but a breezy day. Fanned by the wind, and catching fresh fuel as it advances, the flame which under a serene sky might have smouldered and died out, is blown into a blaze ; and borne on from height to height in rolling fiery billows, ere long it wraps the mountains in clouds of smoke and broad sheets of flame. Not less favorable to the progress and final triumph of God's cause has been the opposition it had to sustain.

For example, look at the reformation of religion in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. It was kindled into vehemence by the opposition that was made to it ; and, advancing against Popery and its institutions with the rapidity and ravages of burning flames, it speedily spread over almost the whole continent of Europe. To correct some errors of the Popish system, to lop off one excrescence here and another there, was the utmost

which Luther at the outset contemplated. Permitted to do that, the German monk would probably have resumed his cowl, and returned to his monastery, to waste his life amid its quiet cloisters, and at length expire, in what his Church called "the odor of sanctity." It was not so. We have to bless God that it was not so; and that Rome was left in judicial blindness to resist all reform. The monk must be crushed! Resolved on this, she launched her thunders at his head, and sought to quench the truth he spake in the blood of its dauntless advocate. This roused all the man in the monk. The opposition Luther met with drove him onward from one bold step to another. The more closely he examined Popery, the more rotten the whole system seemed; the discovery of its errors kept pace with the discussion; and, like a man borne on the bosom of a rapid and powerful stream, it was not long till Luther found himself far in advance of the point from which he started,—far ahead of the petty ends on which he was originally bent. The man who sought at first but to lop off some rotten branches, is ere long, to the astonishment of a world whom his blows have wakened from centuries of slumber, seen boldly standing before the tree itself—burying his axe deep in its sides, and making all Europe ring with the stout blows he delivered on its roots.

So, though intended for evil, the Lord has often turned opposition into good. Indeed, in observing how little Christ's cause has sometimes suffered from its avowed enemies, and how often the very means they employed to hinder have helped it on, I have thought of the eagle, which rises slowly

amid the calm of serene and sunny skies ; but, spreading its wings to the storm and turning even adverse winds to advantage, soars aloft in tempests that strike other birds with dismay, darken the face of heaven, and roar through the troubled air. God so makes the wrath of man to praise Him, and restrains the remainder of wrath, that the almost uniform experience of His Church and people has been that of Israel in the land of Egypt,—“the more they were afflicted, the more they multiplied and grew.” The worst enemies of a cause are false friends. Give me the opposition that, acting like the wind, blows zeal into a brisk and burning flame, rather than that cold, callous, selfish indifference, which our forefathers denounced as “damnable neutrality.” The only effect which they who hesitate, vacillate, show no decision of character, have on a good cause, is to injure it more than the opposition of its enemies. Though they do nothing against Christ, doing nothing for Him, standing apart, and taking no side in the battle, they cool the zeal, and discourage the ardor of its friends. Such men Jesus regards as foes ; saying, “He that is not with me is against me ; and he that gathereth not with me, scattereth abroad.”

On decision of character, man’s best and eternal interest depend. Our position nearly corresponds to that of Israel on Carmel, when Elijah, standing by the mountain altar, addressed the people, saying, “How long halt ye between two opinions ; if the Lord be God, follow Him ; but if Baal, then follow him !” Christ with a cross, but heaven behind Him ; and Satan with the world glittering

in his hand, but hell flaming at his back, stand before us, rival candidates. Each solicits our hands and our heart; and, though Satan would persuade us to the contrary, we must decide between them; the one or other we must serve. In the vain hope of making much of both worlds, unwilling to perish, but yet unwilling to part from sin, many postpone their decision, and attempt to compromise the matter by offering these rivals a divided allegiance. Futile and fatal attempt! Man can divide his time between them, appearing in church on Sabbath and following pleasure on other days in the haunts of vice; and even so divide his money, although I fancy it never was done, as to contribute a sum as great to churches, charities, and religious schemes, as what he wastes on selfish and guilty pleasures. Let him trim the scales so well that the balance shall stand even, and the one form a perfect counterpoise to the other, he cannot divide his heart as he can his time, wealth, influence. To divide a heart is to destroy it; and to those who engage in the vain attempt our Lord has the old answer, "No man can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will hold to the one and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon." Judas tried it; so also did Simon Magus; and so did Demas; and the result in their case was not certainly such as to encourage others to repeat the experiment.

By such attempts Christ is more offended and His cause injured than by sceptics and scoffers, the profane and vicious, His open and avowed enemies. "I would," He says, "that thou wert either cold or

hot ; and because thou art neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth." Nor is the reason far to seek. One traitor within is more to be dreaded than twenty foes without a city. One cold, selfish, narrow-minded, illiberal adherent, by damping the zeal of others, and setting a bad example, does a good cause more injury than almost any number of fierce opponents. Lowering the standard of morals, of benevolence, and of piety, they who render to Christ a divided allegiance, inflict the deepest wounds on religion ; and so far as they are concerned, she has reason to say, Save me from my friends, and I will manage my enemies. If people are to love the world, let them wear her livery, and not assume the garb of followers of Christ. Let those who fight Satan's battles fight them under Satan's banners ; nor, wounding Jesus by their conformity to the world, their self-indulgence, and their vices, give Him occasion, in reply to the question, What are these wounds on Thy hands and feet ? to complain, " These are the wounds with which I was wounded in the house of my friends."

Many flatter themselves that, though they are not saints, they cannot be justly regarded as great sinners. They may not be lovers of Christ or liberal supporters of His cause, but they cannot be said to walk in the way of the wicked, still less to sit in the chair of the scorner. Believe them, they have done nothing against Christ. Now suppose that were true, it purchases no exemption from the curse, " Curse ye Meroz, curse ye bitterly the inhabitants thereof ; because they came not to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord

against the mighty." The question remains, What have they done for Christ and His cause? This their plea, that they have done nothing against Him, what better is it than the servant's, who, on his Lord's return, went and digged in the ground ; and from the hole drew out a napkin ; and from the napkin that he carefully unrolled, drew out a piece of money—which, the exact sum he had received from his master, he returned, saying, Lo, there thou hast that is thine! This man had not betrayed his trust by wasting his master's money ; he had neither appropriated it to his own use, nor squandered it on his vices. Yet, what was the master's judgment on this case,—the case of one, who, it might be affirmed, had done nothing against him. "Thou wicked and slothful servant," says his lord, "thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not strewed : thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the exchangers, and then at my coming I should have received my own with usury. Take therefore the talent from him . . . and cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness ; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth!"

With faith in Christ, we have an anchor to ride out the wildest storm ; blood to wash away the darkest sins ; a ground of confidence that will stand unshaken both in the hour of death and on the day of judgment. But, alas ! for those whose religion is merely negative ; whose hope lies in not having been great sinners like others—like the undisguised enemies of piety, of religion, and Christ. Alas for the day when they stand arraigned at the bar of judgment ! See how the balance

yonder turns not so much on the evil that men have done as on the good that they have done. Fixing His eyes more in pity than in anger on the astonished sinner, the Judge says, “I was an hungered, and ye gave me no meat : I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink : I was a stranger, and ye took me not in ; . . . depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels !” So perish the hopes of luke-warm, cold-hearted professors ! Dealing with those who are not for Him, as with those who are against Him, the Son of God spues them out of His mouth.

Decision of character is indispensable for that choosing of God for our portion, of Jesus for our Saviour, of holiness for our life, and of heaven for our home, without which no man can be saved. These, like other objects, may be objects of our admiration, of our approval, and even of our desires, without becoming our choice. An old heathen said, “I see and approve the better, and yet follow the worse ;” and how many who call themselves Christians could say the same ? Here, good wishes, and even longing desires, are not enough. For example : I fancy that the drunkard does not live who, when he looks at his ragged children, and wretched wife, and the sad wreck of character and happiness he has brought on himself, and contrasts these with the prosperous, happy home of some temperate neighbor, does not approve of temperance, and wish with feelings of bitter remorse that he also were a sober man. Poor drunkard ! His judgment, heart, and conscience are on the side of sobriety ; yet a sober life, though his wish, is not his choice. His wish is

to cast away the damning cup, but his choice is to drink it ; and so, with eyes more open to the consequences than the fluttering bird which, fascinated by the serpent's gaze, walks right into its jaws, under the spell of this accursed vice he carries the cup to his lips ; and repenting only to repeat the debauch, plunges deeper and deeper into ruin.

Nor are the blessings of salvation to be obtained, or progress made in the way of grace, by mere wishes or desires, or even resolutions. It is hard getting to heaven with such corruption as there is within us, and such temptations as lie without us ; nor will anything short of the grace of God and strong decision of mind be sufficient to overcome the torrent and tide of evil. Our godly ancestors, many of them, at least, when they engaged to be the Lord's, perhaps before going to their first communion, wrote out a solemn covenant, whereby, choosing whom they would serve and accepting of Jesus as their Saviour, they gave themselves over to God ; undertaking through Divine help, at whatever pain or hazard, to depart from all iniquity and follow the Lord wholly. And in these marriage contracts between the Lamb and his bride, the Saviour and the sinner, as they might be called, there is a warmth of feeling, a tenderness of heart, an energy and decision which one cannot read without applying to the pious men of that olden time these words of Holy Writ : "There were giants in those days." Yet in our days as well as theirs, salvation is unattainable without, though not perhaps such a formal, an equally decided choice of Christ ; such a pre-

ference of Him over His rivals—sin, the world, and the flesh—as constrains the believing and happy soul to address Him thus : Whom have I in heaven but Thee ? there is none in all the earth whom I desire besides Thee,—dying for me on Thy bloody tree, waiting for me with long-suffering patience, winning me with such love, caressing me with such kindness, loading me with such favors, blessing me with such peace, and crowning me with such honors, Thou art the chiefest among ten thousand and altogether lovely. Thou hast given Thyself for me, can I do less than give myself to Thee ? Command, and I obey ; lead, I follow—laying down my sins and taking up my cross to follow !

It is of the utmost consequence for men to know if they have ever come to such a decision. Happy those who have made Christ their choice ; in whose life there was a day when with eyes divinely opened to behold all the graces and glory of His character, they held to Jesus the language of yon noble woman who bids farewell to home, farewell to friends, farewell to country, farewell to her own weeping sister, and says, as turning to Naomi she throws her arms around her, “Entreat me not to leave thee—for whither thou goest, I will go ; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge ; thy people shall be my people, and thy God shall be my God.”

Decision of character is indispensable to that promptitude and energy both of prayer and action which man’s perilous circumstances imperatively require. The condition of an awakened and alarmed sinner resembles that of the shedder of blood to whom the cities of refuge in the land of

Israel offered protection from the sword of the avenger. Patent roads led to these ; and how were they travelled by him who, throwing fearful glances over his shoulder, described the form of the avenger, saw the gleam of the naked sword, and by-and-by, as the other gained on him, heard the panting of his breath and the tread of his foot ? Many a lovely flower grew by the road-side, but none did he pause to gather ; many a friend was met, but none did he pause to salute ; the hill is steep, but he stoutly breasts it ; the road is rough, but he presses its flints beneath his bleeding feet ; nor draws breath, nor pauses, nor hesitates, till, approaching the blessed boundary, he gathers up his remaining strength into one great effort, and leaps across the line, to fall on the ground fainting, but saved. Did men thus toil, endure, run, fly for life—with this life in jeopardy ? Then what should be their decision of character, what their promptitude of action, what their strong, earnest crying of prayer, who, having Christ to seek, pardon to obtain, souls to be saved, eternal life to win, have a far greater work to do—the time allotted them to do it in often very short, and always very uncertain ? In earning their daily bread, in promoting the welfare of their families, in fulfilling the duties of their worldly station, men have, no doubt, other interests to attend to than those which belong to their souls and salvation. But in these last, which may specially be called their Father's business, their highest and most precious interests are at stake. To these, therefore, let them address themselves with the energy and decision of one who, charged with an important commission from

his master, replied, on being invited to refresh himself, "I will not eat till I have told mine errand!"

So spake Eliezer of Damascus, Abraham's steward, when, seeking a bride for his master's son, he arrived at the tents of Laban, browned by the sun, covered with the dust, weary and worn with the toils of the journey. For long days his seat had been the camel's back ; his only couch the dewy ground ; his food, in dried corn or fruits, the barest sustenance of nature. Now, his journey is happily accomplished. A smoking board, tempting his senses, stands invitingly before him ; and as this hungry man turns a greedy eye on the banquet, how many plausible reasons can he find for preferring the indulgence of his own appetite to the discharge of his master's business ! Exhausted nature plead for a period for refreshment and repose ; and these would require but a brief delay. What possible damage could Isaac's interests suffer by that ? Nay, the business might prosper better for it ; he himself being abler to tell his errand, and Laban, after pledging his guest in cups of generous wine, more inclined perhaps to lend a gracious ear to his proposals. Besides, it was hardly good breeding to decline this hospitable offer. What the one gracefully offered, the other should gratefully accept. Might not his refusal give offence to Laban ? and since "he who believeth shall not make haste," might not the very piety of the good man regard such hurry as indicating a want of faith in Providence ? Besides, it was contrary to the polished manners of the East to plunge at once into the heart of business. The

highest examples might be plead against such indecorous haste. For did not the angels—one being God himself in human form,—who announced to Abraham the doom of Sodom, partake of his hospitality, and eat beneath the oak of Mamre, before entering on the awful business which brought them from the skies ? Besides, no rival was there soliciting Rebekah's hand. Heaven seemed to have granted the good man's prayer—the maiden had met him at the well ; she had shown him kindness ; she had received his presents ; and everything promising a happy conclusion, his business seemed one, if ever there was one, which could not suffer from a brief delay. Such reasons Eliezer might have urged for deferring his mission to his meal. Yet from all these, plausible as they appeared, this decided, resolute, singularly devoted servant, turned aside his ear, to say, as he stood by the untouched banquet, "I will not eat till I have told mine errand"—involving the happiness of my master, the preservation of a chosen race, the fulfilment of God's gracious purpose and glorious promises, my business brooks no delay ; who can tell what a day or an hour may bring forth ?

Would God that men with equal firmness and promptitude repelled the less plausible arguments with which Satan plies them through the lusts of the flesh, the pleasures of the world, and the pride of life ! He persuades them to suspend their choice, and not at once embrace the offer of salvation and give themselves to Christ. But why should sinners who hang over perdition be persuaded to delay that?—or why should God's people postpone any good work they are called to

by duty to their Divine Master, to other men, or themselves? We ought never to let a good resolution go to sleep; nor postpone till to-morrow what we can do to-day. Good in respect of earthly things, such decision is all-important in matters that concern either our own or others' souls. Let men make Eliezer their pattern. He stands by Laban's table loaded with tempting viands, as firm in purpose and prompt in action as if the success of his mission was suspended on his own indomitable energy; while, as if nothing whatever depended on himself, but all on God, he raises his eyes to heaven, crying, "Oh, Lord God of my master Abraham, give me good speed this day!" And God did it. He touched the maiden's heart; to her brother's question, "Wilt thou go with this man?" this her frank and ready answer, "I will go." The steward's prayer was answered; and so also will be ours, whatever we seek, be it mercy to pardon, or grace to help, if we seek under the pressure of these weighty words, "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, nor device, in the grave, whither thou goest."

The Christian's Work.

MANY of Paul's expressions have a warlike ring, and suggest to our fancy soldiers who occupy some of those trying positions which the chances of war often call them bravely, and sternly, to hold. He says, for example, "Having done all, stand." Now, there is nothing, as I am told and believe, which puts the firmness of men to so severe a test as that. It requires no great courage to play the soldier when, in firing or charging, advancing or retreating, they are engaged in the active duties of the field ; but calmly to hold a position where, unsustained by excitement —allowed neither to fight, nor advance, nor retire —they have to stand exposed to the shot that plunges into their ranks, making bloody gaps they have nothing to do but fill up, this tries the mettle of the bravest men. For this, the highest soldierly quality, our countrymen are pre-eminently distinguished, owing some of their greatest victories to their power of unmoveable and heroic endurance under, not as in Paul's days a shower of arrows, but a shower of iron. Wellington is reported to have said of Waterloo that the battle turned on whether we or the French could stand *pounding* longest. Having done all, we stood ; and the day was ours.

To such trials God sometimes puts His chosen and beloved people. After having done everything to protect themselves from the assaults of the Tempter, to defend their reputation, their purity, or peace, duty to God and His cause, duty to themselves or others, requires them to do nothing more than just hold their post ; maintain their position ; patiently endure wrongs they might, but are not allowed to, repel ; and bear without complaint trials or temptations which they cannot avoid, and are not allowed to escape from. So stood Noah by the ark for many years, the butt and scorn of an ungodly world ; and so stood a greater than Noah before an infuriate crowd of hating, hissing, cursing, blood-thirsty enemies. Impeached of high treason, accused of many crimes which His soul abhorred, our Lord confronted the storm, letting it beat on His bent, innocent, blessed head. He stood, dumb, opening not His mouth—to the perplexity, and surprise, and terror of the Roman, answering not a word. Having done all, He stood—stood to be calumniated, tried, cruelly scourged, basely spat on, insulted with a crown of thorns, and condemned in the cross to a death of peculiar pain and infamy. He made no reply—offering no resistance, nor summoning the angelic legions that hovered above the scene, and were ready to descend with flaming swords to His rescue.

Equally warlike is that other expression where Paul says, "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable." Be steadfast, unmoveable ! are such words as we can fancy addressed to men who have formed into square to receive

cavalry—the front rank kneeling to present a hedge of steel, and the next erect, with knit brows, and heads bent to the barrel of the musket along which their eye glares with deadly aim. Hurled on by the tempest, the wave comes swelling, foaming, roaring against the rock ; and so, launched against this serried square, comes a mass of cavalry, with the sun flashing on their swords and the very ground shaking beneath their tread. The sight is terrific. The shock threatens to sweep all before it. The moment is critical. Let the line of the square waver, let it break, and all is lost : the foe, like a whirlwind, rush in at the gap to ride down and cut down the men, crushing the life out of brave hearts beneath their horses' feet. The issue now turns on each man keeping his post ; standing to it like a tree rooted to the soil. At this terrible moment, just before the shock, I can fancy their leader, as he runs his eye along the grim faces of his line, calling out, "Be steadfast, unmoveable," ere he gives the signal which, followed by a loud crash of musketry, empties many a saddle, and rolls back that proud array in bloody discomfiture like a billow shattered against a rock.

The Church of Christ is often placed in equally critical circumstances, the issues of her struggle depending on those who support His cause standing true to it and to each other. The most fatal results have followed the treachery or cowardice which, though but in a few, has broken the line ; their example infecting others, the panic has spread, and the enemy who, so to speak, poured in at the gap, have scattered ranks that, unbroken,

"steadfast and unmoveable," had stood the shock of battle, and come off victorious. And many such moments also there are in that lifelong fight which every Christian has to maintain with temptation. No doubt God promises Divine assistance ; and that when the enemy cometh in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him. Yet in our conflicts with the devil, the world, and the flesh, how much depends on our being steadfast and unmoveable ? Let us dally with temptation, waver, give way in the least degree, yield but an inch, and the day is lost —as we ourselves also should be but for the sovereign grace and mercy of Him who, blessed be His name, promising to heal our backslidings and love us freely, delivers His " darling from the dogs."

To watch, to fight, with steady front to meet and repel temptation—in other words to do no evil, is, however, though an important part, but one, and not the most important part of Christian work. The Church of the living God bears no resemblance to those communities of ants where a certain number of these curious insects form a sort of standing army, and have no other duties but to defend and battle for the commonwealth ; the building and provisioning, and other duties of the ant-hill belong to others, and not to them. Nor, to take an illustration from the arrangements of human society, does Christ's kingdom resemble this or that of any neighboring sovereign ; where the military, wearing a distinct garb and exempted from those productive labors whereby others support themselves and add to the wealth of

the country, form a distinct order of the community. The type of a Christian is seen not in lands where citizens and soldiers, working and fighting men, form different classes ; but rather in those troubled regions of the East, where the husbandman, constantly exposed to the attack of murderers and robbers, ploughs the soil with a carbine slung at his back, or a sword dangling at his side. We are to be ever ready to resist the devil and fight the good fight of faith, yet our main vocation is to work ; and he were but half a Christian who, though more successful than the best saints in that he never went to battle but he went to victory, only resisted temptation —only did no evil. Such negative goodness would present a poor and very inadequate specimen of the Gospel. What God requires of His people is much more than that—is to “do justly, and love mercy, and walk humbly” before Him ; is not only to depart from evil but to do good ; is to be followers of Him who, while holy, harmless, and undefiled, went about doing good ; is, in the words of an apostle, by a benevolent and beneficent life of active, holy, useful labors to abound in the work of the Lord. In regard to which I remark—

All Christians belong to “the working classes”—in a sense. There is one glory of the sun, says St. Paul, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars, for one star differeth from another star in glory. Nor, in respect of variety, is Heaven itself unlike the firmament which forms its starry floor. Basking in the cloudless sunshine of God’s countenance, and engaged

day and night in the lofty services of His throne, are different orders of celestials—angels and archangels, seraphim and cherubim, principalities, dominions, and powers; all perfect mirrors of the Divine perfections, yet each class, like the stars beneath their feet, differing from another in glory. And on leaving Heaven for earth, we find that, however widely they differ, variety is equally a feature of both. The very globe itself presents a series of heights and hollows, hills and dales, mountains that, towering above the clouds, are covered with eternal snow, and valleys that, robed in flowers and crowned with fruit, lie smiling at their giant feet—often, as the humbler classes of society would be, had they grace to look without envy on those above them, happier in their humility than the mountains that overshadow them in their cold, stormy, lofty, barren pride. A corresponding variety meets and delights us in every department of nature; for though in the services of Divine worship, within the church, some, the worst enemies of unity, insist on uniformity, we may say, as the old philosophers did of a vacuum, that Nature abhors it. Uniformity is not the mind or manner of God. What variety of plants between the stately cedar and the lichen that seems only to color the surface of the naked rock; between leviathan, either floating like an island on the glassy deep, or, in His rage, churning the sea into snowy foam, and those creatures which the microscope detects, of forms so minute that ten thousand millions—a number equal to the whole human race—have been found in the space of one square inch. With such inequalities in heaven and earth, among

angels and animals, it were strange if human society presented a uniform aspect, no corresponding variety. It does. God has placed men in different circumstances and endowed them with different gifts. Society has its heights and hollows ; and it were as easy, by throwing down the mountains into the valleys, to reduce this globe itself, as to reduce it to one dead uniform, uninteresting level. Such "equality, liberty, and fraternity" as the French of last century raved of, and to reach waded to their knees in blood, was a dream. These are the privileges of Christ's kingdom ; and of none other. Slaves, whom the truth makes free, are free indeed. Those who love one another as Christ loved them, are brothers ; and more than brothers. And the grandest and only attainable equality is that of the grace of God. It raises all who receive Christ, peasants and princes both, to a common but lofty level ; redeeming them by one blood, sanctifying them by one Spirit, constituting them kings and priests to God, and calling them all up to the glory which Jesus had with the Father before the foundation of the world. The varied conditions of society are the result of laws which man did not enact, and cannot repeal. And though none are forbidden, provided they do not make ambition their god, and wealth, power, or rank their good, from seeking to improve their circumstances, and rise above the level of their birth, as the earth has its hills and valleys, the world will have its higher and lower classes ; some wealthy, others poor ; the few who do not need to depend on labor for their subsistence, and the many who must earn their daily bread with the sweat of their brain or of their

brow—but who, thank God, may find in the prospects of faith and the promises of eternal rest, what can sweeten a cup which the sweat of labor is apt to sour.

On turning, however, to the kingdom of grace, we find that all who belong to it—kings and statesmen, warriors, philosophers, and divines, men of every trade, rank, and profession, men and women alike, belong to “the working class.” All are equally the servants of one Master; and what are servants for but to work? Redeemed by the blood of Christ—His and not our own, we are called to spend and be spent in His service. Here for employment more than enjoyment, for self-denial rather than self-indulgence, every one, even the humblest and obscurest Christian, may adopt the lofty language of Nehemiah, and speaking of himself, say, “I have a great work to do, therefore I cannot come down.” We have first to labor for our own good, eagerly asking, What shall I do to be saved? and giving all diligence to make our calling and election sure. Then, living in a world that has many claims on our pity and much need of our help, on a wild shore, as it were, where the waves are roaring, and from wrecks, with thousands perishing, the cry sounds above the wail of the storm and the thunder of the breakers, Oh, come over and help us, we are called to work for the good of others. Working, toiling, enduring, we ally ourselves to the saints in glory, the blessed dead—who die in the Lord, and whose works do follow them; to angels also, who are ministering spirits sent forth to minister to them who are heirs of salvation; to Jesus also, who entered on His

Father's business at an early age, and to the last hour, when they nailed His feet to the cross, went about doing good ; to God himself, of whose works in creating angels, kindling suns, calling worlds into being, directing the whole complicated machinery of providence and of grace, Jesus said, " My Father worketh hitherto, and I work." Necessity, the mother of invention, is also the mother of work ; and it may need an effort of resignation to reconcile people to a position where, from day to day and from year's end to year's end, they have to work to live. But to live to work, should be our choice, and esteemed a noble destiny. " My Father worketh hitherto," said Christ. God lives to work ; and by such a life we prove ourselves the children of our Father which is in heaven.

Now, in regard to the character of the work in which Christians are to spend their life, I remark that it is the work of the Lord ; and this, it is important to observe, may embrace our most common employments. Some appear to think that God's service, like that of the king who required the Israelites to furnish the tale of bricks without supplying straw to make them, enjoins and demands impossibilities ; as, for instance, when believers are required to " pray without ceasing." How, it is asked, can any man pray without ceasing ? But take the injunction, not in the letter which killeth, but in the spirit which giveth life, and it is not so impossible as many suppose ; nor at all impossible, as has been proved by multitudes who have gone to exchange in glory the perpetual prayers of earth for the perpetual praises of the skies. Undertaking no work : giving no advice ;

entering into no company ; if senators, never rising in parliament ; if soldiers, never going into battle ; if seamen, never embarking on a voyage ; if travellers, never beginning or resuming a journey ; if surgeons, never performing an important and difficult operation ; if judges, never taking their place on the bench ; if ministers, never leaving their study for the pulpit ; whatever they were, never engaging in life's most common business without seeking the help of God ;—prayer, like a silver thread, runs through the web of their life. It is no exaggeration to say of them, that, though not always actually engaged in prayer, yet always ready to engage in it—always maintaining their minds in a prayerful frame—with the bow never unbent, the instrument, though not always sounding, never out of tune—they prayed without ceasing.

Not less possible than to “pray without ceasing,” is, though it may seem to some impossible, this other duty of “always abounding in the work of the Lord.” Entered on, and carried on, in a devout and pious spirit, our most common avocations rise out of their secularities into a loftier region. Assuming the character of religious duties, they may be called the work of the Lord. For, as a scene, though it presents at all times in fruitful fields and waving forests, gleaming river, shaggy mountains, winding shores, and rolling sea, identically the same objects, glows with beauty and brightness when bathed in sunshine, so piety makes a good man's whole life religious—the heavenly spirit in which they are done imparting a heavenly character to the humblest and most homely of his

works. We may be engaged in the work of the Lord as well with a spade or plough in our hand as a Bible ; on our knees scrubbing a floor, as on our knees in the attitude and act of prayer. Come, for example, into this workshop of Corinth, where Paul is spinning cordage, or sewing a covering, or, axe in hand, fashioning a pole, or otherwise busy tent-making. Finding the great Apostle of the Gentiles employed in such secularities, one is tempted to address him in God's words to the prophet, "What doest thou here, Elijah ?" Is this a place, or that an employment for such a man as Paul ? And yet though, all fashioned alike, made of the same materials, and sold in the same market, there is no apparent difference between his tents and those of others ; whether Paul work with axe or needle, the hours he spends in tent-making are sanctified—are spent in the work of the Lord. He asserts a minister's just claim to maintenance, and yet earns his bread with the sweat of his brow, foregoing his rights that the ministry be not hindered. Acting from the noblest motives and for such an end, Paul gives a religious character to a common employment ; and the needle of the tent-maker neither demeans nor dishonors the hand that waved tumultuous assemblies into silence, and won the honors of a martyr's chain. Whether I eat or drink, he said, or whatsoever I do—go to a feast, or a funeral ; make tents, or sermons ; go to the market to sell my work for money, or to the church to sell Christ's free salvation without money or price ; earn my bread with the sweat of my brow, or accept the hospitality of Gaius, mine host ; make

tents at Corinth, or fight with wild beasts at Ephesus ; escape from Damascus in a basket, or, brought to bay, stand like a lion before Nero at Rome,—I do all to the glory of God ! Doing so, all he did, and doing so all we do, may be appropriately called the work of the Lord.

God's people shall renew their strength and mount up with wings as eagles. But it is quite a mistake to fancy that, like that bird, which builds her nest on the dizzy crag, and soars aloft, and sails along in the paths of the clouds and thunder, religion belongs only to the highest, and what are called holy, duties of life. While she rises to its highest, she stoops to its meanest, occupations. As well as the seraphs that sing before the throne, as the heralds who sound the trumpet of the gospel and proclaim salvation to perishing sinners, as the Christian who enters his closet to hold communion with God, they are doing the work of the Lord who kindle a fire, or sweep a floor, or guide a plough, or sit over a desk, or work at a bench, or break stones on the road, with a desire so to do their work that God may thereby be glorified. All work done from such motives and for such an end, becomes the work of the Lord—and thus our life, in all its phases, entirely spent in the work of the Lord, should flow on like a river which, however rough its bed, short or long its course, tame or grand the scenes through which it passes, springs from a lofty fountain, and, born of the skies, bears blessings in its waters and heaven reflected in its bosom.

I remark, further, that those things which are done in the name and service of religion, are em-

phatically the work of the Lord. This is the sense in which Paul uses the phrase, when, writing to the Corinthians, he says, "Now if Timotheus come, see that he may be with you without fear, for he worketh the work of the Lord, as I also do :" and what he means by that comes out clearly in his eulogium on Timothy, "I have no man like-minded who will naturally care for your state, for all seek their own things, not the *things of Jesus Christ*; but ye know the proof of him, that, as a son with the father, he hath served with me in the Gospel." And what are the things of Jesus Christ, here identified with the work of the Lord, but those grand objects for which, leaving His Father's bosom, the Son of God descended on this world to live, to labor, to sorrow, to suffer, and to lay down His life on Calvary—a propitiatory sacrifice for the sins and a noble substitute for the persons of men?

With tastes and a nature like ours, our Lord appreciated the pleasures of friendship, and of feasts also. He had an exquisite enjoyment in the beauties of nature—passing many happy hours in his journeys through the smiling land, in quiet walks by the shores of Gennesaret, and midnight musings among the hoary olives of Gethsemane. But these, though pleasant brooks to drink in the way, were not the things He lived for. In His Father's glory, and lost souls saved, and a ruined world redeemed, He had nobler objects : these drew Him from the skies ; to these He referred when, addressing Pilate, He said, "For this cause came I into the world." He came to work out salvation ; and would God that all men, answering the call, Work out your salvation with fear and trembling, went up to

heaven from doing what He came from it to do ! There is no doubt that that is the work of God. Our Lord has distinctly said so—this is His reply to those who asked Him, What shall we do that we might work the works of God ? “ This is the work of God, that ye believe in him whom he hath sent.”—in other words, that ye lay hold on eternal life through faith in Jesus Christ.

And this salvation, about which many are so strangely careless, is the great work that has engaged God himself from the counsels of eternity, and shall engage Him to the end of time ; for which He has revealed mysteries, and wrought miracles, and bestowed gifts—in number beyond reckoning, in value beyond all the power of words to express, or the highest flights of fancy to imagine. Has the sea been divided ? Has the sun been stopped ? Has bread fallen from the skies, and water gushed from the flinty rock ? Have the lame leaped, and dumb lips sung, and blind eyes seen, and its grim tenants left the tomb ? It was to prepare the way for this work—to further a work of God's greater than creating out of nothing a thousand worlds, or lighting the night with the fires of ten thousand suns. To save our lost race, God did not spare His own Son. For that end He gave up His Son to death, and the Son gave up Himself. And why does God at this moment tolerate the flagrant crimes and wickedness of earth ? why sleep the fires of Sodom ? where are the waters of the avenging deluge ? In preserving the world from destruction, in sending summer and winter, seed time and harvest, in raising up one nation and casting down another, in directing and over-ruling

all sublunary events from the fall of kingdoms to the fall of a sparrow, God has one purpose. It is that which angels have come down from heaven to help and devils have come up raging from hell to hinder—the salvation of sinners and ingathering of His chosen people. For their sake He spares His enemies : the tares for the wheat ; Sodom for the Lots within its walls ; nor till the last of these has left them, shall the City of Destruction be ready for burning. And how should men labor for an end that is of such value in God's eyes, and should be of such importance and immediate urgency in their own ? To be saved and sanctified ourselves, and to be also the instruments of saving others—of plucking brands from the burning, the drowning from the devouring sea, this is especially and emphatically “the work of the Lord ;” one in which men, who are exalted to be fellow-heirs with Christ, are called to be fellow-workers with God.

In those works which may be especially called the work of the Lord, be it observed that God's people are required not only to engage, but to abound, and to abound always. A harp is mute till its chords are made to tremble ; and as its strings emit no sound till they are struck, some plants emit no fragrance till they are crushed—yielding their odors to the hand that bruises them. So it is with some people. When all things go well with them—fortune smiles, health blooms on the cheek, prosperity flows—bearing them on its affluent tide to wealth, or fame, or place, or power, or whatever is the object of their ambition, they neglect their souls. They drown all thoughts of another world in the pleasures of this.

Nor is it till the scene changes, and the calm turns into a howling storm, and God, in the form of poverty, sickness, disappointment, bereavement, lays the hand of affliction on them, that they turn to Him ; and, seeking the salvation of their own and of others' souls, betake themselves to the true business of their life. And hard as such afflictions were to bear, how many in heaven are now thanking God that they lost friends and fortune ; and that when they were driving full sail on destruction, He sent a storm that woke them up to see, and, by His timely help, to escape their danger ? If the prodigal had not starved by the swine troughs, he had never been regaled at his father's table. If Jonah had not been tossed on the sea, and also tossed into it to be whelmed into darkness and the depths, he had never broken the peace, and, bringing them to repentance, saved the people of Nineveh. If the widow of Zarepthah had not looked with horror-stricken eyes on an empty barrel, she had never met the Prophet whom she brought to her house to fill it. If the crimes of the thief had not brought him to the cross, he might never have been brought to Christ. It is by a blow that many in the first instance are brought to their knees ; nor do some ever become rich, till misfortunes make them poor.

But this work, however God's people may, in the first instance, have been led to engage in it, is one in which they are called to abound in all circumstances and seasons. They may be more lively at one time than another. Grace, like the ocean, has its spring as well as common tides ; and, as in times of revival, an extraordinary effusion of the Spirit

may reveal itself by more than ordinarily earnest prayers, devout exercises, holy lives, and liberal offerings of time and money to the cause of Christ. But the abundance of God's people more resembles that of a river which, fed by perennial springs, is always flowing, than the summer flood which, though it fills its stony channel to the brim with a red, rapid, roaring river, so soon as the lightnings cease to flash, and thunders cease to peal, leaves its bed dry—in a few hours, or days at furthest. Though a believer, from a sense of the feebleness of his love and the fruitlessness of his life, may be often constrained to cry, "My leanness, my leanness!" it should not, and need not, be so. The grace of God is marked by the affluence which characterizes all His works. What abundance in that sun which has shone so many thousand years, and yet presents no appearance of exhaustion, no sign of decay? What abundance of stars bespangle the sky; of leaves clothe the forest; of raindrops fall in the shower; of dews sparkle on the grass of snow-flakes whiten the winter hills; of flowers adorn the meadow; of living creatures that, walking on the ground or playing in the waters, or burrowing in the soil, or dancing in the sunbeams, or flying in the air, find a home in every element—but that red fire in which, type of hell, all beauty perish, and all life expires?

This lavish profusion of life, and forms, and beauty, in nature, is an emblem of the affluence of grace, of God's saving, sanctifying grace. In Christ all fulness dwells. We are complete in Him. There is in His blood sufficient virtue to discharge all the sins of a guilty world, and in His Spirit sufficient

power to cleanse the foulest and break the hardest heart. Ye are not straitened in me, says God, but in yourselves. Try me herewith, He says—ask, seek, knock ! Who does will find that it is only a faint image of the plenitude of grace we behold in that palace-scene where the king, looking kindly on a lovely suppliant, bends from his throne to extend his golden sceptre, and say, What is thy petition, and what is thy request, Queen Esther, and it shall be given thee to the half of my kingdom ?

The abundance that characterizes all God's works, and especially His grace and saving mercies, should characterize all our services. Take prayer for example. Though all find time to sin, some allege that they have no time to pray. Believe them, and they are so engaged, and indeed overwhelmed with the cares and business of the world, that they have no leisure for an exercise without which, I venture to say, the soul is as unable to live as is the body without food ; as are flames without air ; as are plants without water. So they neglect prayer. They have no closet in their house for prayer ; the family altar where pious parents worshipped is a ruin ; and between their door and this well of life the untrodden grass grows green. How does an old and even popish proverb rebuke their carelessness, and refute their false pretences ? *Mess and meat, it says, hinder no man's work ; as, if it needed proof, is demonstrated by some illustrious examples recorded in the Word of God.* Look for instance at Daniel ! Prime Minister of the King of Babylon, at the helm of the state, with the complicated affairs of a vast empire to manage, he found time, besides

offering many silent and sudden ejaculations, for stated closet prayer thrice every day. Look at the royal Psalmist! His case is not less, but rather more remarkable. Involved in incessant troubles, with a throne to defend, twelve turbulent tribes to govern, cases of justice to decide, cabinet councils to hold, armies to lead to battle, how did he abound in prayer! Amid the bustle of camps and the temptations of a court, he prayed, not twice, according to common custom, nor with Daniel thrice, but seven times each day—living in an atmosphere of devotion, he consecrated half his waking hours with prayer. How much the Church owes to David's prayers! To these she owes his psalms. By these he kindled those fires of devotion which have kept her piety alive through all succeeding ages. While to prayers that drew down strength from heaven Daniel, no doubt, owed the faith and fortitude which threw open his closet window to the gaze of spies, and descended with unblanched cheek and majestic mien into the den of lions. And let Christians remember that they shall sit nearest these saints in glory who in abounding, believing prayers have most resembled them on earth.

But with prayer the work of the Lord embraces all the duties belonging to the Christian life; and to see how we should not only make, but abound, for example, in sacrifices on behalf of the cause of God and salvation of souls, look at the conduct of the Israelites in the wilderness! The conduct of the Israelites? "Can any good thing," people may ask, "come out of Nazareth"—be found in such a stiff-necked, ungrateful, and rebellious race?

Hardly had they seen the sea engulf Pharaoh and his host, when they murmured for water : water gush from the flinty rock, when they murmured for bread : bread in the form of manna lying round their tents, when they murmured for flesh ; yet one bright passage in their history puts to shame many of higher pretensions, and also higher attainments. The tabernacle of God, in other words the cause of religion, stood in need of their self-denial and liberality. Though He who rained manna from the skies and turned the rock into a flowing stream could have done without their aid, raising a gorgeous tabernacle, like His cloudy pillar, from the desert sand, He conferred on them, as He still confers on us, the honor and privilege of contributing to His cause. "This is the thing," said Moses, "which the Lord God hath commanded, Whosoever is of a willing heart, let him bring an offering to the Lord, gold, silver, and brass ; blue, scarlet, purple, and fine linen ; oil for the light, spices for the incense, and precious stones for the breast-plate." So their leader appealed to the people ; and as the water gushed from the rock to the stroke of his rod in a broad, full, sparkling stream, they answered this appeal with a flood of gifts. Rich, though, alas ! too rare, examples of pious bounty, of earth reflecting the glorious affluence of heaven, the maid forgot her ornaments and the bride her attire ; ears, fingers, arms were spoiled of sparkling jewels ; gold gleamed and precious stones flashed thick on the vast, rising heap of fragrant spices, and finest textures of Egyptian looms ; the spoils of Egypt were poured into the treasury ; and such was the flood of gifts which answered

Moses' call, that he had to cry, Hold, it is enough!

Pity it is, not creditable to religion it is, that the liberality of those whom Christ has redeemed with His blood needs, now-a-days, so much and often the stimulus of rivalry, the charm of eloquence, urgent and earnest entreaties—the spur often, the curb-rein almost never. Would to God we were more fired with the love of souls and of Him who spared not His own Son to save us! Then would we spare our persons and our purses less; and not only abounding, but delighting in the work of the Lord, our life would rise more to the height of its motto, these grand words of Paul—I will gladly spend and be spent for Christ.

Perseverance in Well-Doing.

ACTIVITY, as much as anything, and more than most things else, is that which distinguishes life from death. How still, as well as solemn, the chamber of the dead ! Death has been called a long sleep, and sleep a short death ; and they resemble each other much—sleep, with eyelids closed, the ears shut, the lips sealed, and a countenance calm, unimpassioned, without one trace of the griefs, and fears, and cares that lie buried in temporary oblivion, simulating death. Yet the heaving chest ; though subdued, the audible and measured breathing ; though faint, the living color on the cheek ; and the warm touch, so different from death's icy hand and marble brow, bespeak functions active amid repose ; and show how life never rests, and wears in sleep but the mask of death. Things inanimate—as dead bodies, stones and metals, earth, air, and water—are passive. On the other hand, all animate are active creatures ; as well the insect that flits in its play from flower to flower, as the angels that, speeding forth on God's high errands, fly from heaven to earth, or from world to world. So closely associated, and indeed inseparable, are the ideas of activity and life, that we at once conclude what is inactive to be inanimate—the bird that, dropping to the gun,

lies motionless ; the soldier who, with ball through head or heart, springs into the air, and falling on the ground, never more moves a limb ; the dying man that, sinking back on his pillow, heaves one long sigh, and breathes and stirs no more. We pronounce these dead without a moment's hesitation. There may be the appearance of life but certainly not its presence, where there is no activity ; as they rightly concluded who, sailing in Arctic seas, fell in with a ship, for long years imprisoned in the ice, and looked in its cabin on a strange, appalling, weird-like scene. Fifty years had come and gone since living voice or step had sounded there, yet all the crew were there. They lay in couches on the floor, each attired in the dress and presenting the form and flesh of life ; while their captain sat by the cabin table, pen in hand, and the log spread out before him. The spectators of so strange a sight, with mingled feelings of doubt and terror, shouted ; but no response came back. Nor crew nor captain stirred. All were dead, and had been corpses for half-a-century—the frosts that killed, preserving them. Life-like as he looked who bent over the table with a pen in his fingers and the paper before him, in which, the last survivor, he had recorded their sufferings, he also was dead ; as they knew on seeing him sit unmoved by their shouts ; his eyes retaining their glassy stare, and his form its fixed and frozen posture.

The activity that thus marks all other kinds of life is characteristic of the Christian's. Sometimes distinguished by heroic daring, and prodigal of noble deeds, at all times it is a life of doing ; is so even when, feeble as an infant, the believer lies

helpless on a Saviour's bosom, and living chiefly on the milk of promises, is able to do little else than express his wants in prayers and plaintive cries. And, as the spiritual, like the natural, life advances in course of time to maturity, this activity goes on to complete development. It so increases by increase of grace that, with a heart which beats more and more true to the love of God, with feet that walk, hands that work, and a tongue that speaks in His service, the Christian, once a babe, grows into a man in Christ ; his model He who, in contrast to him that walketh about like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour, went about continually doing good. For, while doing, or activity, characterizes all life, "doing good," or "well-doing," is the peculiar character of the Christian's life. The "well-doing" of earth is what heaven shall greet with its own "Well done ;"—"Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." And what an inspiring and powerful incentive does this, with many things else, present to persevere in grace ; to "be careful to maintain good works," and again to quote the words of the apostle, "not to be weary in well-doing ?"

In regard to the duty of not being weary in well-doing, I remark that, although there is not much difference in sound, there is a great difference in sense, between being wearied *in* a work and wearied *of* it. Of this difference sick rooms often supply examples. The nurse who moves about there by day with professional coolness, when the house is still at night, nor sound breaks the silence, but the beating of the clock, and the feverish breathing of

her charge, drops asleep, weary of the tedium of watching. Not so the mother, trembling for a life that is trembling in the balance—all her cares, anxieties, and thoughts, save in the prayers she sends off to heaven, shut up within the narrow space of that chamber's walls. Her sunken eyes, and pallid cheek, and feeble step bespeaking exhaustion, have awoke others' fears for her; but, strong in love that is deaf to remonstrance, she refuses to leave her post; and if, heavy with grief and care, her drooping eyelids close, it is because she is wearied *with* watching, not weary *of* it; on the contrary, racked with anxiety, she fights with sleep, and starts from its short, broken slumbers at the poor sufferer's faintest cry, or feeblest moan.

Amid other scenes—those of war, for example—the same distinction presents itself. Animated by no ambition, no love of country, no spirit of daring enterprise, this soldier gets tired of the long marches, the ill-requited hazards and hardships of the campaign. Seizing the first opportunity to leave, he returns home to enjoy inglorious ease, and hear birds rather than bullets whistle. Another, his companion both at school and in the ranks of war, returns also in course of time to their native village; but his sleeve is empty, and he wears gray hairs on his head, as well as medals on his breast. Wearied, not of, but in, the war for liberty, he left his gallant comrades with reluctance, and eyes which filled with tears as he took a long, last look of the colors that, rent and riddled, waved above him in many a hard contested field. In these men we see the well-marked difference between being wearied *in* a work and weary *of* it.

To take an example from sacred story, we see it in two persons there—the one a prominent, the other a pre-eminent character; the one a type, the other the great antitype; both, though unlike in these things, like in this—that they lie buried in the arms of sleep. Look at the prophet Jonah, and at Jesus! Weary not merely in, but of, a service which called him to endure hardships that he disliked, and face dangers in Nineveh that he greatly dreaded, Jonah thought to put the sea between him and these; and not these only, but God also. For this purpose, he took ship and fled—a deserter from his post. Exhausted with anxiety of mind and toil of body, the fugitive falls asleep; nor, though the tempest roared, and the ship reeled and pitched and plunged amid the stormy billows, wakes till a rough hand shakes him, and a voice cries in his alarmed ear, “Arise, oh thou that sleepest, and call upon thy God!” From that sea turn to another—swept by as fierce a storm, lashed into as angry waves. Caught in the sudden tempest, a solitary boat is tearing its way there, on the lake of Galilee. The crew are pulling for their lives. In vain they struggle! Wave after wave breaks over them, filling their bark. They bale, but she is ready to founder. A few moments more, and, but that they carried Jesus, these, like other fishermen, had found a grave where they were wont to find their bread. And, ere the Master rises to rebuke the tempest, and bid the waves be still, how is He employed? He sleeps; sleeps stretched on a hard bench, beneath a boat-cloak, with the sea breaking over His prostrate form, amid the blaze of lightning, peals of thunder,

and the loud uproar of angry elements—sleeps like an infant rocked in its cradle, or warmly nestled in a mother's breast. Nights passed in prayer, and days spent in preaching or in incessant labors of benevolence, have exhausted His frame, drying up all His strength; and there Jesus lies in calm, deep sleep, a wonderful example—the most wonderful the world has seen—of one wearied, not *of*, but *in*, His Father's business.

In regard to this well-doing in which Christ's followers desire and try to live, it is quite different from the "well-to-do" and "well-doing" of the world, as it uses and understands these expressions. They present examples of that abuse of language which, with other sins of his day, Isaiah so strongly condemned. In that remarkable chapter where he denounces Covetousness, saying, "Woe unto them that join house to house, and add field to field"—denounces Intemperance saying, "Woe unto them that rise up early in the morning that they may follow strong drink; that continue until night till wine inflame them; that are mighty to drink wine, and men of strength to mingle strong drink," the prophet thunders out his woe against another great, if not greater evil. Addressing men who play with conscience and poison the fountains of truth, who bedizen the cheek of vice, and throw the robe of an angel over the form of a fiend, "Woe," says Isaiah, "unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter." Every age, present or remote, has sought in this way to gloze over sin. For example, sceptics and infidels—as if all who

believe in God's word were enslaved—claim to be "Free Thinkers ;" again, the vile seducer is only described as "loose" who, under the mask of affection, steals in her virtue woman's most precious jewel, and tramples on her bleeding heart ; again, they are merely said to live "fast" who wreck their fortunes, ruin their hapless children, impair their constitution, precipitate their death, drown their senses and damn their souls with drink ; again, "unfortunate" is the mild term applied to her who, like a night wolf, prowls the streets for prey, and whose den, in the judgment of Solomon, and the bitter experience of her victims, is "the way to hell ;" again, the duellists, who went out to settle a petty quarrel with loaded pistols, and shoot each other dead, were said to engage in "an affair of honor ;" and, but some few years ago, "the domestic institution" was the soft and gentle term applied to that wide-spread, gigantic, infamous, infernal slavery, from the stain, the burning shame, and bitter curse of which America has only escaped by years of war, at the cost of millions of money and rivers of human blood. Here is a misapplication of terms nearly as gross. "Calling evil good, putting light for darkness and bitter for sweet," those who grow rich, no matter how—who, turning a deaf ear to every holy and humane appeal, to the claims of widows, the cries of orphans, the miseries of a world that perishes in ignorance and sin, heap up wealth, are said to be "well-to-do" in the world ; at market and on 'change, are spoken of as "doing well." A "well doing" and "well-to-do" this, that shall meet no "Well done" from

the Judge of all, at the last day and on the great white throne. Blessed award, it is reserved for such as have modelled their lives on His who, beginning life in a borrowed cradle and closing it in a borrowed grave, spent its years in hard toil and yet harder poverty—envying the foxes their holes and the birds of the air their nests !

A busy, useful, holy life, and none other, is a life of well-doing ; is a noble life, though passed in a cottage ; is a happy one, though its path be rough and thorny. In a world where there is much to do, it allots little time for self-enjoyments, and no time for sinful ones. Filled up with the duties of home and business, with the paramount interests of eternity and of our souls, with good deeds done to others, and the claims they have on our help, its days, instead of walking on leaden feet, seem to fly on eagles' wings—the busiest life appearing all too idle, and the longest proving all too short for the work we have to do. Like a toil-worn laborer, weary in though not of his work, the Christian may sometimes wish it were concluded, and long for sunset that he might leave the field to go home—his the desire of the Psalmist, Oh, that I had the wings of a dove, that I might fly away and be at rest ! Yet toiling and enduring, bearing others' burdens along with his own, living not for himself, regarding every day as lost which is not marked by some good got or done, and regarding himself as the steward of God's bounty—not a lord but a laborer in the vineyard, that man, though he may be weary *in*, will not be weary *of* well-doing. Such a life was Paul's—he declared himself ready gladly to

spend and to be spent for Christ. Such a life was Dorcas'—she employed her fingers making clothes for the poor, and unlike many who die leaving none to miss them, had a crowd of widows to weep by her bier. Such a life was Job's, who, while humbling himself in the dust before God, stood erect before the world, in these noble terms to describe and justify his character, “When the ear heard me then it blessed me, and when the eye saw me it gave witness to me, because I delivered the poor that cried, the fatherless, and him that had none to help him ; the blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon me : and I caused the widow's heart to sing for joy. I put on righteousness and it clothed me ; my judgment was as a robe and diadem. I was eyes to the blind, and feet was I to the lame ; I was a father to the poor.” And, obscuring all others, as does the sun the stars, by its superior lustre, such a life was His who, our pattern and propitiation both, calls us by His example, as by His word, to well-doing—saying, as He points to the crown glittering on the top of a cross, If any man will be My disciple, let him deny himself daily, take up his cross, and follow Me.

Christ's followers, though weary of, are to persevere in their work, watch, and warfare—persevere to the end ; like Gideon and his three hundred men, though “faint, yet pursuing.” If, for the sake of illustration, we select the last of these three grand branches of Christian duty, the warfare, namely, where could we find a better pattern than his case supplies ? Whether the overwhelming numbers of the enemy, or the extraordinary means

of their defeat is considered, the victory which he and his band achieved, and followed up with unsparing slaughter, is one of the most remarkable on record. God's foes and his, the Midianites and Amalekites, we are told, " lay along in the Valley of Jezreel, like grasshoppers for multitude—their camels without number, as the sand on the sea-side for multitude." Inspired of God, Gideon steps from the threshing-floor to summon his countrymen to arms ; and, peasants leaving the plow in the furrow, shepherds their flocks on the hill, fishermen their boats by the shore, the bridegroom the marriage festival, and orphans their father's bier, they crowd to his standard. Two and thirty thousand men muster to the bloody fight ; and on vantage ground, in some mountain gorge, what might not such an army accomplish with every man resolved to do or to die, to conquer or to perish ? But, when the chaff is blown away, the thirty-two are reduced to ten thousand ; and these again to no more than three hundred men. " If thou art afraid," said the Lord to Gideon—nor great wonder he should be with such odds against him—" go with thy servant down to the host and hear what they say." With noiseless foot, wrapped in the cloud of night, he steals on the camp, and, listening, hears two soldiers talking—one tells how he dreamt that a barley cake came tumbling into the host, and, strange result, overturned a tent ; a dream his comrade interprets, saying, " This is nothing else than the sword of Gideon, for into his hand God hath delivered Midian and all the host." Hailing the happy omen, Gideon stealthily withdraws, and, breasting the hill with

light heart, rushes in among his little band to cry, "Arise! the Lord hath delivered the host of Midian into your hand!" They spring to their feet; and each man with a sword by his thigh, a trumpet in one hand and in the other a pitcher with a burning lamp within, they follow their leader—his only order this, As I do, so shall ye do! It is the middle watch; and the mighty host, whose camp they silently encircle, lies buried in slumber. Each man holds his breath; silent and motionless he listens, and, bending forward, peers through the gloom for the expected signal. Suddenly Gideon's trumpet, blown loud and clear, rings through the silence, and a lamp—for he has broken his pitcher—flashes on the darkness of night. Lost in astonishment, the sentinels stop on their round; but ere they have time to raise the alarm, hundreds of lights are flashing, hundreds of trumpets sounding: and on all sides the air is rent with shouts and this wild battle cry, "The sword of the Lord and Gideon!" Springing to their feet and rushing from their tents, the whole host is panic struck; and, mistaking friends for foes in the darkness and confusion, men grapple with their neighbors, and draw their swords to bury them in each other's bosoms. The uproar grows wilder and wilder; the carnage rages fiercer and fiercer; Gideon and his men, the while, standing by to see the salvation of God. The host destroys itself. God wins the victory; and they who struck no blow reap the fruit—Gideon's only part being to put the broken, bleeding fugitives to the sword, and hang on their rear, "faint, yet pursuing."

The part we have to act in the Christian warfare

is similar to this ; and similar to this should be the way we do it. Gideon's followers were first reduced from two-and-thirty to ten thousand, and again reduced to three hundred ; these being made spectators rather than actors in the bloody drama, that they might not say, Mine own hand hath saved me ! Such is the story of the Cross. There, like Gideon and his men on the midnight plains of Jezreel, we stood by to see the salvation of our God—Satan, the enemy of our souls, bruised under the conqueror's heel. Jesus, not we, won that great victory. We struck no blow, we had no hand in it whatever ; yet like those who hung on the rear of Midian, slaughtering their flying foes, we have a part to act—our part this, to complete if I may say so, the work which Christ began ; to destroy every vestige of life in the serpent whose head He crushed ; to expel sin wholly from our hearts and our habits, as Gideon expelled its enemies out of the land of Israel.

He who is converted, believes, and is thereby savingly united to Christ, has still, to use the words of Nehemiah, "a great work to do." We enter then on a harder task than Gideon's. His enemies, paralyzed with terror, flying like a flock of sheep that barking dogs pursue, fell without an attempt at resistance. Not so does Satan yield. He makes desperate efforts to rally his scattered forces, and recover the ground he has lost. By no means easily expelled, he lurks in our habits and hides in the recesses of our hearts. Now a cunning serpent and now a roaring lion, at one time with devilish craft he proposes terms of peace, and at another, seeking not to deceive,

but to cast us into despair, he comes forth, boastful as Goliath, to defy the armies of the living God. And even when he flies, as the apostle assures us he will do if we resist him, he flies like the ancient Parthians—fighting all the while, and with the fiery darts he shoots, putting the believer's peace in jeopardy, and making his armor ring. Having self to conquer, with a carnal heart to crucify, evil passions to subdue, and habits to break off which age and indulgence have fostered into a second nature, our part of the work, instead of being finished, may be said to begin at the period of conversion. Nor is any sin,—though flesh and blood plead for it, saying: It is but a little one,—to be spared. “Cursed be he that keepeth back his sword from blood!” In this holy war there is to be no truce proclaimed, nor quarter given. Whoso nameth the name of the Lord is to depart from all iniquity; to cast out all sin. No easy work! I know a weed which, more than any other which infests the ground, gardeners and husbandmen find it troublesome to extirpate. Shooting its long, knotted fibres under the surface, spreading in all soils, whether rich or poor, with unexampled rapidity, it survives being crushed beneath the heel, or cut into morsels with the spade; and, tenacious of life, springs again if the smallest portion of its root has been left in the ground. Such is sin. It is very hard to destroy: yet must be wholly rooted out of the life and out of the heart, since, if we do not kill sin, sin will kill us.

Now, God's people ought never to forget that this perseverance in well-doing, whatever depart-

ment of the Christian life they be engaged in, they cannot maintain without drawing constantly on the grace of God. The wick which is left to burn without a due supply of oil soon burns dim ; and going out, leaves the house to darkness. Constant cropping exhausts the most fertile soil, nor do reapers long gather harvests from its bosom unless it be fed with manures, or allowed to rest. And who does not know that the amount of work to be obtained out of either men or horses, depends on the quality and quantity of their food ? Indeed, Wellington used to say that victories were won not so much by him or others who led the troops to battle, as by the Commissariat—those who were charged with finding provisions for the army ; and history relates how the fate of one great battle was determined by one good meal—victory remaining with those who had broken their fast before they went into action.

Called to resist the devil, to overcome the world, and, what is more difficult than either, or perhaps than both, to crucify the flesh ; called to work out our salvation with fear and trembling, and, what is yet more difficult, to "stand still and see the salvation of God ;" called in life's active duties to do His will, and, what often proves more difficult, under sore bereavements and heavy trials to bear it—our only hope, and all-sufficient help is in the Spirit of God. Unless constantly supplied with grace the brightest light will burn dim ; all spiritual vigor will decay ; and, like soil the husbandman scourges with constant cropping nor nourishes with manure, the soul will soon have to cry, "My leanness, my leanness !" So there is no saving so

bad as that which grudges time for seeking those divine supplies which we obtain in the use of prayer, of the Bible, and of those other channels through which they are wont to flow. There are bad savings. Humble life affords examples of them in those who, leaving venerable parents to poverty or public alms, save money to buy gaudy dresses ; and the higher walks of life, also, in such as, refusing the claims of charity and religion, hoard up riches for children to waste on vanity or their vices ; but of all savings the worst is time saved for the business or pleasures of life off that which should be given to communion with God, the Bible, and prayer, in the morning or at the close of the day. How can he escape wounds who rushes into battle without taking time to put his armor on ? To win the fight, a man must gird on his weapons ; to draw sweet music from an instrument, he must tune its strings ; nor can a laborer endure the tear and wear of work, if he neglects his food,—unless he supplies the waste of bone and muscle with nutritious meals. The soul, not less than the body, wants its necessary food.

A most important truth ! To overlook it—but that the covenant of grace is well-ordered in all things and sure—would involve us in a fate worse than his who some winters ago owed his death to neglecting the means necessary for the support of life. The fatal morning broke dimly on hills all white with snow, and a sky along which the tempest hurled thick blinding drift. Alarmed for his flock, the shepherd dressed in haste ; and, deaf to the entreaties of a prudent wife who implored

him to eat and strengthen nature for the coming struggle, he pulled his bonnet on his brow, and went out into the storm. It was bravely but rashly done. He never came back. Denied her necessary support, nature speedily sank under his violent exertions; and he perished—the sleep he sought on the snow bank where they found his stiffened corpse, deepening into the torpor of death, the sleep that knows no waking. And if not their death—for they that are in Christ shall not finally perish—to what do saints often owe their falls and failings, but to their neglect of prayer, and of God's word, and of other divinely appointed means of grace? He who would work without ceasing, must pray without ceasing. He who would do great things for God, must seek great things from Him. It is well, though faint, like Gideon, to be pursuing—getting on to heaven, though with faltering steps and many falls ; but it is better not to fall, to be pursuing and not fainting, constantly going on in the strength of the Lord.

Still, it is no great wonder that God's people are sometimes ready to faint. The servant is no better than his master, and in Gethsemane Jesus himself sank under the weight of this mysterious burden. Even His strength seemed unequal to the task, as thrice under an agony that rent His bosom with groans and bedewed the grass with blood, He implored His Father, saying, Father if it be possible, let this cup pass from me ! The Saviour almost fainted. The greatest saints have done so. Though no fragile weed bending to the wind, but rather like a lighthouse tower, that shining through the deepest gloom and rising from

the solid rock, holds itself erect amid tempests which snap the stoutest masts, and, sending ships staggering through the waves, strew the shore with wrecks, Elijah fainted. Despairing of success, he abandoned his post ; threw up the helm ; took his strong hand from the plough ; and, wearied and worn out with what appeared a hopeless task, cast himself at God's feet to cry, O Lord, it is enough, take away my life ! We can enter into his feelings. How often does it seem impossible that we shall ever walk without stumbling, ever love God with all our hearts, ever closely follow Christ's holy footsteps, ever be ready and ripe for heaven ? Yet in such well-doing, let not God's people weary. In the pursuit of such noble, exalted objects, why should they faint ? The sweat standing on his brow, and the blood of the heathen dripping from his sword, Gideon, as he pressed on the flying foe, sought bread at the gate of Succoth. His request was refused ; and, the more honor to him and his followers, though refused and faint, they resumed the pursuit. But did any ever ask strength of God for well-doing, for his work, or watch, or warfare, and find the gates of prayer, like those of Succoth, shut in his face ? No. HE GIVETH POWER TO THE FAINT, AND TO THEM THAT HAVE NO MIGHT HE INCREASESTH STRENGTH. EVEN THE YOUTHS SHALL FAINT AND BE WEARY, AND THE YOUNG MEN SHALL UTTERLY FAIL ; BUT THEY THAT WAIT UPON THE LORD SHALL RENEW THEIR STRENGTH ; THEY SHALL MOUNT UP WITH WINGS AS EAGLES ; THEY SHALL RUN AND NOT BE WEARY ; THEY SHALL WALK AND NOT FAINT.

Man's Inability.

ARISTOTLE—says South in one of his brilliant sermons—Aristotle is but the ruins of an Adam. This being the view of man which the Bible presents, and the Fall accounts for, those who receive it in its integrity have been charged with holding low, mean, degrading views of the nature and of the dignity of man. In one sense this is true ; in another nothing is more false. It is true in so far as the Bible teaches us to believe that all men, in consequence of sin, are criminals in the sight of God and lie under sentence of death ; that all are dead in trespasses and sins ; that there is none that doeth good, no, not one ; and that, presenting sin in a totally different aspect from that in which it is regarded by many as a light and little thing, sin is exceeding sinful. Hence, brought by grace to see its vileness, and to feel its exceeding evil, the holiest men have always been the humblest, the strongest have felt the weakest, the best have thought the worst of themselves—David, the man after God's own heart, saying, I was as a beast before thee ; Job, the most remarkable character of his own or any age for piety and uprightness, saying, as he shrank from his own image, I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes ; and Paul, though the greatest of all the apostles, much too great as well

as honest to fish for compliments and deprecate himself that others might praise him, speaking of himself not as the least, but as less than the least, of all saints. If these are the terms in which men of the purest minds and holiest characters have felt constrained to speak of themselves, how is it possible to entertain too low views of human nature? What terms can express its degradation other than those of Scripture—our righteousnesses are as filthy rags ; or, in figures borrowed from the loathsome leprosy, the whole head is sick, the whole heart is faint, and there is no soundness in us, but wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores. We do entertain low views of human nature ; and so, however loudly they assert its dignity, do others—all who put locks on their doors and a witness on his oath, build prisons and support police.

Yet to allege that those who believe in the fall and corruption of human nature, cherish only low, mean, degrading views of man, is in another sense, quite wide of the truth. If the value of anything **is to be estimated by its price, to what an** immeasurable height of worth does it exalt man that God gave His Son to redeem him!—redeeming him not with corruptible things such as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ as of a lamb without spot or blemish. So far from cherishing low views of man, I believe that a gem of inestimable value lies concealed beneath the beggar's rags. A soul is there of divine-like faculties and of priceless worth : and a body also, which, though the seat of appetites that man shares with brutes, and of passions, perhaps, such as burn in the breasts of fiends, may become more

sacred than any fane built by human hands—a temple of the Holy Ghost. There is a worth in man no meanness of circumstances, no degradation of character can altogether conceal. He is a jewel, though buried in a heap of corruption; the vilest outcast, possessing powers and affections that need only to be sanctified to ally him with angels, and make publicans and harlots fit for heaven. Fallen though he be, man is capable of undergoing, and, created anew in Jesus Christ, born of the Spirit, brought from nature into grace, undergoes, a more wondrous change than the insect when, no longer a worm, no longer crawling on the ground, no longer feeding on garbage, it leaves its shell to spend its happy days in sport, flitting from flower to flower; its food their juices and its bed their leaves. We thus assert the dignity of man. Only that his greatest, purest dignity is seen, not in what he does, but what has been done for him; not in what poets or philosophers have written, but the Bible has revealed of him as redeemed by the precious blood of Christ, as a living temple of the Holy Spirit, a son of God, and an heir of glory. Yet I remark, notwithstanding—

Man can neither convert nor sanctify himself. Endowed with an intellect which, though defaced, has survived the Fall, his capacities and capabilities are great. As if he were a God, he measures the heavens, weighs the hills in scales, and the mountains in a balance. He subdues the elements, rides on the wind, rides on the waves; makes the lightning his swift messenger; and yoking fire and water to his chariot wheels, compels them to serve him. Prolific in invention and skilful in arts, as if

he were a creator, he can make the elements he subdues. Image of Him who giveth rain, whose voice is heard thundering in many waters, who casteth out His ice in morsels, and scattereth His hoar-frost like ashes—man makes snow, and ice, and rain, and dew, and lightning ; and, falling on the strange discovery that the brilliant diamond is formed of the very same matter as coal, he has boldly pressed on his Maker's steps, and all but succeeded in rivalling nature's gems. But though it were hard to say—such is the progress of arts and science—what human skill may not accomplish, it has its bounds. There is a line across which it has never passed, and cannot pass ; where a voice is heard, saying to the boldest adventurer, Hither shalt thou come but no further. By no skill or combinations of matter can man give being to the lowest living thing. Master of the elements, by their help he travels the earth with an eagle's speed ; wingless, he ascends into the air and traverses its pathless fields ; he makes the sea his high road—skims along its surface or descends to bring up the treasures that with the skeletons of men and wrecks of navies lie on its oozy bed. Yet there is not a living thing, the meanest that lives in earth, or air, or ocean, but it baffles his power to make. It were easier for him to make a planet than a plant. It were at least as easy to kindle a sun, or send a world spinning through the realms of space, as to make the lowest living thing—a worm ; the green mould of decay ; the humblest moss that clothes or lichen that colors a stone ; one of those creatures, thousands of which find a sea to swim in in a drop of water. However the

vivifying elements, as they are called, of light, and air, and heat, and moisture, may act as auxiliaries to the development of life, all that lives both in the vegetable and animal kingdoms had a parent like itself—from which it sprung by seed, or egg, or germ, or spore ; and every attempt which science has made to produce a living creature through the action of dead elements and the combinations of dead matter, has produced nothing but a failure—every such failure proving that the stream of natural life has its spring in the Creator, its fount nowhere but in God.

Hear, O Israel, the Lord thy God is one Lord ! is the testimony borne to the divine unity by all the kingdoms over which He sways His sceptre.—There are innumerable analogies between nature and grace ; and the correspondence between God's works in both kingdoms only grows more manifest the more carefully they are studied. The discoveries of science are shedding a clearer and clearer light on the Word of God : and in the matter of spiritual life the study of nature prepares us to receive the revelations of the Bible. It is with the one as with the other life. As unable to awake the sinner as to awake the dead, man cannot give it. Our life is hid with Christ in God. Nor will any one who sees how no combination of means and circumstances, though important as auxiliaries to its development, can create life, changing dead into living matter, be astonished that Jesus, turning all eyes and hopes on Himself, said, “ I am the way, the truth, the life.” Therefore, He says, because I live, ye shall live also ; and thus it is true both of conversion and sanctification, “ Except the Lord build the house,

they labor in vain that build it ; except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh in vain."

It follows, from the foregoing, that we owe our success in spiritual matters not to ourselves, but to God. In temporal things, His hand is always as present, and sometimes almost as visible, as when it appeared to Belshazzar's eyes writing his doom on the plaster of his palace wall. It may be said, indeed, that manifest interpositions of Providence are rare ; and that for every ten persons in whose fortunes they appear in the shape of remarkable prosperity, relief from troubles, escape from danger or from imminent death, there are ten thousand who earn their bread, and bring up their families, and win their way in life entirely, so far as appearance go, by their own exertions. Another King of Babylon—uncrowned, dethroned, bereft of reason, driven out to herd with cattle, the greatest, saddest spectacle of earthly vanity the world has seen—presents a monument of the unsoundness and danger of such views. He was taught to feel in his fall the hand he denied in his elevation. And since the heart may swell as proudly under frieze as imperial purple, and God be as little recognized amid the few comforts of a cottage as amid the luxuries of a palace, let us beware. Many have been guilty of Nebuchadnezzar's crime, who neither wore his crown nor bore his punishment.

What though our lives have been distinguished by no remarkable providence—does that prove that their success and our thanks are not due to God ? Tell me not that the hand of the diligent

maketh rich. Will it do so unless He pleases? If He sees meet that men shall be poor, in vain they rise up early and lie down late, and eat the bread of sorrow. If He sends rain to drown our fields, can we shut up the windows of heaven? If He raises a storm to sink our merchantmen, can we walk the sea with the foot of Jesus, or rise with Him to bid the waves be still? If He roll a tide of bankruptcy over the affrighted land, can we arrest its progress, and say, ere it break on our house and beat it down, Hither shalt thou come, but no further? In other words, hast thou an arm like God, or canst thou thunder with a voice like Him? The means we use to preserve life and health, acquire wealth, honor, or any other earthly blessings, are nothing more than the levers, cranks, shafts, and rolling wheels of a machine, of which God is the moving power. It is His will, not ours, that makes our hearts to beat and the blood in our veins to circulate; that makes food nourish and sweet sleep refresh us; that makes our business yield its profits and our fields their harvests; that sustains our efforts and crowns them with success. When our mountain standeth strong, let Him hide His face, and we are troubled. "Therefore," says the psalmist, in a burst of adoration, "thine, O Lord, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty; for all that is in the heaven and the earth is thine: thine is the kingdom; and both riches and honor come from thee; and thou reignest over all."

For all spiritual blessings we equally depend on God. How does the state of heathen countries prove that except He build the house, they labor

in vain that build it? In their case the experiment has been tried: and the result, to keep up the figure, is a house indeed, but one based on sand; daubed with untempered mortar; and ready, so soon as the floods rise, and the winds blow, and the rains descend, to bury its miserable owner in its ruins. What man, independently of his word, can know of God, and do for himself, is not proved, as some allege, by the correct principles of morality and conceptions of the Divine Being to be found in the writings of infidels. They parade the world in borrowed feathers, and shine in stolen gems. Whatever is high in their morality, or correct in their notions of God, I trace to the very book they profess to despise and reject. Would we see what man can know of God, or be without Him and His word, turn to those lands where no ray of gospel truth has ever shone; and where, by the lurid light of altars red with blood, we see man kneeling to a beast, to a stock, to a stone; practising cruelties and crimes he vainly seeks to expiate by offering the fruit of his body for the sin of his soul. Darkness covereth the earth, and gross darkness the people.

And when we open the Bible it is to see, in whatever aspect our salvation is regarded, that the pivot on which it turns is not the power or will of man, but the mercy and the might of God. Whose was the love salvation sprang from? whose the Eden promise that begat hope in the bosom of despair? whose the finger that wrote the holy law? whose the prophets that heralded the Saviour? whose the Son that was cradled in Bethlehem and crucified on Calvary? whose the Spirit that, taking of the

things of Christ, applies them—turning the sinner into a saint, a child of the devil into a son of God and an heir of glory? These questions admit of but one answer. That love, that promise, that finger, that Son, that Spirit is God's. In Him all our well-springs are ; nor by any hand but His was forged one single link of the golden chain that binds believers to the skies : “Whom he did foreknow, them he did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son ; and whom he did predestinate, them he also called ; and whom he called, them he also justified ; and whom he justified, them he also glorified.”

What the Bible in these words, elsewhere, and everywhere indeed, teaches, daily experience proves. Thousands possess the means of salvation, and might be saved, who are not. They starve by a table loaded with bread ; die beside a fountain into which they have only to descend to be healed : with Christ within their sight, within their cry, opening heaven to others, they perish with the thief who perished at His bleeding side. Two men are in one bed, one is taken, and the other left : two women are grinding at the mill, one is taken, and the other left—a circumstance painfully illustrated in the spiritual history of many a family and many a church. Of two children reared under the same roof, taught the same truths, guarded with the same holy care, one is taken and the other left—of two members of the same church, sitting in the same pew, hearing the same sermons, baptized in the same font, and drinking of the same cup, how dissimilar their fates!—one is taken and the other left. Mysteries these that nothing can unlock but

this, that salvation is not of flesh or blood, or of the will of man, but of God—that it is not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of Hosts.

For the purpose of teaching a truth that shoulc inspire and animate our prayers, God has often wrought out His ends by the most unlikely means. There are objects in nature not less astonishing for the smallness of the worker than the greatness of the work. Such are the coral walls around those lovely isles that, carpeted with flowers, clothed with palms, and enjoying an everlasting summer, lie scattered like gems on the bosom of the Pacific. These, with the ocean roaring in its fury before them, and behind them the lagoon lying like a molten mirror broken only by the dash of a sea bird or the dip of passing oar, are stupendous ramparts. Compared to them our greatest breakwaters dwindle into insignificance. One of these reefs off the coast of New Holland is a thousand miles in length, and how many hundred feet in depth, I know not. Yet the masons that build these are creatures so small as to be almost invisible. Such mighty works does God accomplish by instruments so mean! a sight that helps a believer—though he has to say with Nehemiah, I have a great work to do—to take heart and hope, and say with Paul, I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.

But we have not to go to nature to see God accomplishing great purposes by unlikely means. The Bible is full of such examples. We should have committed the treasures of divine truth to the charge of some mighty monarch, and called the

Saviour of the world from the loins of a Cyrus or a Cæsar—of one whose weakness should not tempt him to seek safety in a lie, and whose family should have been in no danger of dying through famine. My ways are not as your ways, says God, neither are my thoughts as your thoughts. In Abraham, an obscure Chaldean, an exile, a wanderer without any home but a tent, or property in the soil but a grave, God puts the dearest interests of mankind into the weakest hands. In that patriarch the hopes of the world hang on a man around whose head swords are flashing, and into whose breast—but that his steward perhaps in the battle he fought to rescue Lot thrusts it aside—the robber buries his spear. In him and Sarah the hopes of the world are hung on a pair whose bed is childless, and on whose heads time has shed its snows. And again, when a child is born to them in Isaac, the salvation of a lost world hangs by a single strand : and again in Jacob's family, it turns on a dream and fortunes as unlikely as any that fill the pages of a romance. With Abraham in the battle ; with Isaac on the altar ; with Joseph in the dungeon ; with Moses cast on the water ; with Rahab in the beleaguered city ; on yon field, where, with two armies looking on a stripling goes out to meet the giant ; on yon plain, where, through the midnight gloom, we see a mother hurrying with her babe from the swords of Herod and the massacre of Bethlehem, how often was the light of truth nearly extinguished, the ark that carried the hopes of the world all but wrecked ? Never to human sight was good ship more nearly wrecked !

Nothing is more remarkable in the Bible than to

see how God, as if to teach us to trust in nothing and in none but Himself, selects means that seem the worst fitted to accomplish His end. Does He choose an ambassador to Pharaoh?—it is a man of stammering tongue. Are the streams of Jericho to be sweetened?—salt is cast into the spring. Are the eyes of the blind to be opened?—they are rubbed with clay. Are the battlements of a city to be thrown down?—the means employed is, not the blast of a mine, but the breath of an empty trumpet. Is a rock to be riven?—the lightning is left to sleep above and the earthquake with its throes to sleep below, and the instrument is one, a rod, much more likely to be shivered on the rock than to shiver it. Is the world to be converted by preaching, and won from sensual delights to a faith whose symbol is a cross and whose crown is to be won among the fires of martyrdom?—leaving schools, and halls, and colleges, God summons His preachers from the shores of Galilee. The helm of the Church is entrusted to hands that had never steered aught but a fishing-boat; and by the mouth of one who had been its bloodiest persecutor, Christ pleads His cause before the philosophers of Athens and in the palaces of Rome. And when He chose the weak things of the world to confound the strong, and the foolish to confound the wise, what did God mean to teach us but that we are to look above the instruments to the great hand that moves them; and that, whether it was a giant or a devil that was to be conquered, the eyes of the body or of the soul that were to be opened, walls of stone, or, what are stronger, walls of ignorance and sin that were to be overthrown, men are but

instruments in His hand,—the meanest mighty with Him, the mightiest mean without Him !

This inability forms no reason why a sinner seeking to be saved, or a saint to be sanctified, should not use means—giving all diligence, indeed, to lay hold on eternal life, to grow in grace, to make their calling and election sure. Well and justly is God's service called *reasonable*. All that it requires is that men bring the same good common sense to their spiritual interests which they employ in conducting their ordinary affairs. " Give us day by day our daily bread" does not imply that we expect to be fed like Israel with manna, or like Elijah by ravens. While by such a prayer acknowledging himself a pensioner on God's bounty, man sows his fields ; waits on his business and on his God ; prays and ploughs together. Even so in all, likewise, that concerns our highest interest, we are, to use the words of Scripture, to be, "fellow-laborers," co-operating, working together with God ; doing on our part what we can do, and God on His part doing what, though indispensable, we cannot do. These two cases, taken from Christ's history, happily illustrate this.

It is a Sabbath morning ; and, its doors thrown open as the hour of worship approaches, the synagogue begins to fill. Among those who enter is a man with a withered hand ; and however others come, there is haste in his step and high expectation seated on his brow. Blessed day, now is his chance to be healed. Jesus is in the neighborhood, and is sure to be at worship. Early there, likely the first, this crippled man, heeding nothing else, looking at none, talking with none,

keeps his eye on the door—keenly observing all who enter, and often, as it opens and Christ appears not, disappointed. At length the feet of a group are heard ; again the door opens ; and the color that flushes his face tells that the person has now come whom he has come to meet. Nor is this all he can do, and does. Observing where Jesus, attended by His disciples, sits, he rises, and, elbowing the crowd aside without regard to their challenge or murmurs, pushes on to place himself before the Saviour,—right in His eye. All this he can do, and does, and more. Ordinarily concealing a deformity he was ashamed of, he now drops his robe, and, exposing the poor unsightly hand in the hope that it may catch Christ's eye and move His pity, sits with looks fixed imploringly on our Lord. There was no need for him to speak. His eager looks and the poor, bared, withered hand were touching prayers. Nor did these prayers wait long for an answer. The eye that never saw misery but to pity it is at length turned on him ; and Jesus says, Stretch out thine hand ! Strange command to others, perhaps also to himself—as bidding him do the very thing he had no power to do. Still he tries it. Again doing what he can, he makes an effort—and, Glory to God ! bursting from his lips, succeeds. Virtue goes out of Christ. The shrunken hand instantly acquires a healthful color, and swells into its right proportions. In his joy the man shuts and opens it ; moves the pliant fingers ; and holds the miracle aloft to the gaze of a crowd, dumb with astonishment. Give him a harp, and with that hand he would sweep its sounding strings to the praise of Jesus Pattern to

men who have souls to be saved, and hearts to cure, he did what he could—using all means within his power to obtain the blessing. And, did people, with equal eagerness, repair to the church on Sabbath, as he to the synagogue, to meet Jesus Christ, and with the same earnestness and the same faith, lay out their sins and soul's sorrows before Him, our Sabbaths would witness greater works than this—He who healed that withered hand healing withered hearts, and, whether they required to be saved or sanctified, giving power to them that have no might.

Take another case. Covered with dust, footsore and weary, a messenger presents himself to our Lord, and speaking in Mary and Martha's name, says, Behold he whom thou lovest is sick ! Tell a mother that her child is fallen into the river. It is enough. She stays to ask no questions, to hear no more. She is off on flying feet ; and, descrying its sinking head, with one wild scream she leaps like a flash into the roaring flood. With no such haste, much as He loved Lazarus, did Jesus turn His steps to Bethany ; but abiding where He was for two days, left His friend to die ; even as, with a still grander purpose in view, on seeing the serpent creep into Eden He made no haste from heaven, but left our first parents to fall. He whom He loved has died, is buried ; and four days thereafter the news that "the Master is come" brings the sisters this consolation, that, though they have lost a brother in Lazarus, they have still a friend in Christ—one who sticketh closer than any brother, and who, as the event proved, can restore a brother. They go to the grave to weep, but He to wrench

its bars asunder, and stand there more conspicuously than in almost any other scene both God and man ; in His works a God and in His tears a man. He is to raise the dead. Yet though the chief He is not the only actor on a stage where it might be fancied man had no part to play. By that tomb men do not sit mere spectators of the might and majesty of Godhead, Jesus addressing them to say, Stand back, stand still and see the salvation of God ! A great stone closes the mouth of the sepulchre ; standing, with the Saviour in front and the corpse behind it, between the living and the dead. It must be removed : and Christ has only to say the word, and, moved by hands invisible, it rolls away to disclose the secrets of the tomb. But He who takes away stony hearts, because none other can, does not take away this stone ; nor address it, but those who have put it there, and can take it thence. He requires them to do what they can—each doing their part ; theirs to roll away the stone and His to raise the dead. Now, though we can neither convert nor sanctify ourselves or others, yet man has something, and much to do, as is plain from such words as these, “Cast away from you all your transgressions, whereby ye have transgressed ; and make you a new heart and a new spirit : for why will ye die ?” Strictly speaking, we cannot make us a new heart, but we can place ourselves or others in a position for God to make it. We can remove obstructions to that gracious and holy change—we can dispel ignorance, put away temptation, abandon bad habits—the drunkard’s cup, for instance—renounce pleasures that occupy

our hearts. Thus removing what obstructs the flow of life and grace from Christ, we can "take away the stone;" and, co-operating with God in the use of these and all divinely appointed means, we can, and, as we can, we ought to work out our salvation with fear and trembling, God working in us both to will and to do of His good pleasure.

It is with man and God in the production of spiritual, as with the skies and the soil in the production of material, fruit. Gathering harvests each successive year from fields whose wealth of fruitfulness seems exhaustless, we say, How bountiful is the earth!—the world's, like the widow's, meal-barrel, is never empty. We speak of the fruits of earth, and the flowers of earth, and the harvests of earth; but these, her offspring, have another parent. Heaven claims their sweet juices, and fragrant odors, and glorious colors, as hers, and most her own. To the treasures of light, heat, rain, and dews, poured from exhaustless skies on the dull cold soil, earth's flowers owe their beauty, her gardens their fruits, her fields their golden harvests. Each, at any rate, has its own part to do; nor would a husbandman labor to less purpose under a sunless sky on fields bound hard with frost and buried in perpetual snow, than preachers without the cheering, warming, enlivening influences of the Sun of Righteousness, the dews of grace, and the blessing of the Spirit. Man's is but a husbandman's office—to plant; to water; nothing more. "Paul," as the apostle himself says, "planteth, Apollos watereth, but God giveth the increase; so, then, neither is he that planteth anything, nor he that watereth, but God that

giveth the increase." And thus, whether we preach or are preached to, when most diligent in the use of means, let a sense of our inability turn our eyes and all our hopes on God. With Him is the blessing and the residue of the Spirit. Nothing, indeed, so much hinders the cure of a soul as what helps the cure of a body. Many as the analogies between the processes of grace and nature are, here there is none—but a total dissimilarity. In that anxious sick room, where life and death struggle for the mastery, it is all-important to sustain the patient's strength. This offers, so to speak, his only chance ; and for that end there is no charm in drug or stimulant more potent than boundless confidence in the skill of the physician. Such confidence in man lies at the foundation of the physician's success ; such confidence in man is fatal to a minister's. This may be one reason why, with so many sermons, there are so few conversions ; why, among the crowds that throng God's house, so many depart unblessed, unsaved, unsanctified—no better, but rather worse. God will not give His blessing to such as, shutting Him out, put their confidence in the use of means—in the virtue of sacraments or the power of sermons, in dead books or living preachers. He is a jealous God, and will not give His glory to another.

God's Ability.

WERE we to judge of the matter by the conduct of many, we should conclude it to be by no means a difficult thing to be a Christian. They seem to think it almost as easy to wash one's heart as their hands ; to change their habits as their dress ; to admit the light of Divine truth into the soul as the morning into our chamber by opening the shutters ; —in short, that it is not more difficult to turn the heart from evil to good, from the world to God, and from sin to Christ, than to turn a ship right round by help of her helm.

How else can we account for many, otherwise sensible people, putting off their salvation to a time confessedly unsuitable for any arduous task whatever—till, reduced to a state of mental and physical prostration, they lie languishing on a bed of sickness, or tossing on a bed of death ? It ought to be an easy work that is deferred till then : yet what a sad mistake is this ? An easy work to be a Christian !—as if the life required of those who go to heaven were in such harmony with our natural feelings that it was like being borne along on the surface of a placid stream. “Take now thy son, thy only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah, and offer him there for a burnt-offering on a mountain which I will tell thee

of," was the command God laid on Abraham, the trial to which He put His servant's faith ; and how did its every sentence quiver like an arrow, go like a knife into the old man's heart ? Was it easy for a father to brace up his nerves to such a deed ; to look on the beloved youth, the innocent and unsuspecting victim, for those three dreadful days they travelled together to the fatal spot ; to lay the wood on Isaac that, kindled by a father's hand, was to consume his son to ashes ; to meet that natural but terrible question, " My father, behold the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt-offering ?" And when the fell purpose could be concealed no longer, and the dreaded hour at length had come when Abraham must raise the veil, was it easy to look on Isaac's horror and resist his entreaties, and hear his agonizing cries ? or even witness his resignation as, moved by his father's grief, and pitying him more than himself, he stretched his body on the altar, saying, Father, not my will, but thine be done ? And when with trembling hands the old man wound the cords around his limbs, and felt them tremble, had it not been easier to be the child than the father, the victim than the priest at such a sacrifice ? One stroke of the knife, and Isaac's woes are past ; but if he does not rise like a phoenix from his ashes, what a return to his home awaits Abraham ! what a meeting with the mother ! what a future to the poor old man ! His heart is broken, and his gray hairs go down with sorrow to the grave.

Never again may love to God be put to such a test, or faith in His promises have such a trial to endure. Still it is no easy thing to be a Christian ;

and, if words have any meaning, they are great and painful sacrifices which are required of those who are willing to take Christ on His own terms : "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me"—" If thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out and cast it from thee : for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell. And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee : for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell." God does not indeed put all His people to such a trial as Abraham's, saying, "Take now thy son, and offer him for a burnt-offering," nor does Christ lay on all His disciples an injunction so hard as this, "Go, sell all thou hast, and give it to the poor." Still the adage holds true as ever, No cross, no crown ! To mortify the lusts of the flesh, to be crucified to the world, to overcome the devil, to die daily to sin, and live daily to righteousness, to be meek and gentle, and patient and generous and kind and good, in one word to be Christ-like, is a work beyond far beyond our ability ; one we should never venture on, or having ventured on, would soon abandon, but that God promises to perfect His strength in our weakness, and is "mighty to save."

Now the best evidence we have of what God can and will do is what He has already done. This was the source of Moses' confidence when he left the land of Midian to conquer the power of Egypt, and bring Israel out of the house of bondage. Behold, he said to God, when first called to undertake the

task—behold, the people will not believe that I am able to deliver them. "What is that in thine hand?" said the voice from amidst the burning bush. A rod, was his reply. "Cast it on the ground," said the voice. He did it ; and springs back with sudden terror—surprise, fear, horror in his countenance, for there a serpent with head erect, and eyes of fire, and cleft quivering tongue, is hissing at him. Once more the voice sounds out from the bush, "Put forth thine hand, and take it by the tail." Recovering from his panic, he boldly seizes the writhing reptile ; and now its cold, scaly form is no sooner within his grasp than, like many things else which become harmless in the hand of faith, the venomous creature stiffens into a shepherd's rod. His confidence established on a firm foundation, Moses hesitates no longer. Entrusting his wife and children to her father's care, and leaving others to feed his flocks on the hills of Midian, he enters boldly on his mission. Repairing to his countrymen he tells them his errand. The rod is his credentials. It shall speak for him. Assured that what God has once done He can do again, he bids them look. His answer to such as question or doubt his authority is a shepherd's rod, which, flung from his hand, no sooner touches the ground, than it changes to a living serpent.

And though man has no inherent power to sanctify any more than to save himself, even, according to the words of the apostle, to think one good thought, let us, with Moses, David, and the saints of old, remember the years of the right hand of the Most High. See what, for such great and gracious purposes, God has done for others,

and thus learn what He can and will do for us !

Take two instances. Look at the thief on the cross. It is from the very edge of the pit, just as he is going over, that the mighty hand of Jesus plucks him. Who that heard that robber with his fellow and the base crowd insult a dying Saviour, who that saw him nailed to his cross, a daring, despairing, hardened ruffian, could have believed it possible that a few hours thereafter he would be singing songs in Paradise ? Yet the sun of that day had not set behind Judah's hills ere a blaspheming wretch ripe for hell was converted, saved, and sanctified ; and had taken his flight to heaven to tell to listening angels what mercy had done for him—how Christ had saved him at the uttermost. Look also at Paul. The old bed of the sea laid bare for the foot of Israel, the dry rock changed into a gushing fountain, the rotting tenant of the tomb rising at Christ's word, to appear, once divested of the grave-clothes, with life sparkling in his eye and health blooming on his rosy cheek, did not attest God's power over dead matter more plainly than Paul's conversion attests His power over a depraved heart. What more incredible than that yonder man who, with a fierceness, a firmness of purpose, and an intensity of hatred uncommon to the ingenuous years of youth, stands glutting his eyes with Stephen's blood, would ere long be Christ's greatest and most devoted apostle ; and would die, after a life of unparalleled sufferings, a martyr in the very cause for which he shed the first martyr's blood ? Yet so it was. Is anything too hard for Me ? saith the Lord ; in other and

fuller words—is any heart too hard for Me to break ; any sin too great for Me to pardon ; any passions too strong for Me to bind ; any habits too old for Me to change ; any prayer too great for Me to answer ; or any wants too many for Me to supply ? The blessed lesson such cases teach us is this, that however great the difficulties, or deep the sorrows, or strong the temptations, or arduous the duties of His people, His grace, as He promises, shall be sufficient for them. And so they may use the highest and yet the humblest, the bravest though by no means boastful saying that ever fell from mortal lips—"I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."

Such is the help which His people have in their God ; and this furnishes the key to the strange paradox of Paul, "When I am weak, then am I strong"—in other, and apparently self-contradictory words, when I am weak then I am not weak ; when I am *not* strong, then I *am* strong. Peter's history, and that of many others besides, supplies a remarkable illustration of the reverse proposition, this namely, When I am strong, then am I weak. Let us look at it. So strong was Simon in his own vain judgment that in place of waiting till Christ invited him to walk on the water, he volunteered to make the bold attempt. Addressing his Master as, stepping with Godlike majesty from billow to billow, He approached their boat, Peter said, "Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water." To drown not him but his vanity, and mortify the conceit and presumption which was his besetting sin, our Lord acceded to Peter's request, saying, Come. The permission is

no sooner granted than, probably without a prayer for Divine help, and certainly with more rashness than genuine courage, he leaps from the boat. The water bears him up: he walks the rolling billows—yet, ere he rejoins his companions, how effectually is he taught that when a man is strong, then he is weak? He began to build without counting the cost; and the only result is a house which, unfinished and unfurnished, remains the inglorious monument of his pride and poverty. Its terror increased by the gloom of night, the storm raves and roars, and the waves rushing on with foaming crests threaten to engulf him, and avenge themselves on the puny mortal who has dared to defy their power. His situation is novel and alarming. A panic seizes him; his courage melts like a snow-flake on the water; he feels the waves opening beneath his feet; he sinks, deeper and deeper sinks, till this rash adventurer, who would walk the sea, the rival of his Master and the envy of his fellows, raises his drowning head to throw out his arms and cry, Lord, save me! As has often happened where there was more than life at stake, and in scenes less picturesque, or public, Jesus hastens to the rescue—"a refuge and strength, a very present help in time of trouble;" and, upheld by the arm that upholds the universe, Peter is borne back to his companions, who receive him into the boat, pale, half-drowned, trembling with abject terror—a warning and very memorable illustration of the saying, "Pride goeth before a fall."

For a contrast look at Moses—the feelings with which he undertook, and the manner in which he

executed his commission to deliver Israel from Pharaoh and the house of bondage. What a remarkable and happy contrast his case to Peter's ! Strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might, he forced his way into the palace, and bore himself before the king with undaunted courage—demanding the liberties of his countrymen. Single-handed and alone he stuck by his purpose, and carried it over what seemed insuperable difficulties. Without arms he undertook to conquer armies ; to cross the sea without ships ; and in a journey extending over many years, to carry a mighty host safely through a desert where there was neither water to quench their thirst, nor bread to satisfy their hunger. All this, and much more than this, Moses did ; nor closed his eyes in death till he saw the longest, grandest march men ever made brought to a triumphant issue on the borders of the Promised Land. But Peter's enterprise and his were not more different in their conclusion than in their commencement. Self-confident, rash, vain, impulsive, the fisherman of Galilee rushed on the perils of the deep ; while Moses, a man more highly endowed by nature and cultivated by education, shrank from the task assigned him ; declined the post of honor ; and, overwhelmed by a sense of his own weakness and inadequacy, even remonstrated with God, saying, "Who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh?" Nor till the Lord's anger was actually kindled against him, as he stood there starting one objection after another, did he venture to undertake the task. He went to it, not in his own strength, but in the might of God. To Him he looked

for counsel and courage, for faith, patience, and success. And He who did not fail Moses, will never fail any that put their trust in Him. The salvation of the righteous is of the Lord ; He is their strength in the time of trouble ; the Lord shall help them and deliver them, and save them because they trust in Him. Therefore with the courage they may lift up the battle song of Martin Luther, and in words which cheered the hearts and sustained the arms of Germany in the good fight of the Reformation, sing :

A sure stronghold our God is He,
 A trusty shield and weapon,
 Our help He'll be, and set us free
 From every ill can happen.
 That old malicious foe
 Intends us deadly woe ;
 Armed with the strength of hell,
 And deepest craft as well,
 On earth is not his fellow.

Through our own force we nothing can,
 Straight were we lost for ever ;
 But for us fights the proper Man,
 By God sent to deliver.
 Ask ye who this may be ?
 Christ Jesus named is He,
 Of Sabaoth the Lord ;
 Sole God to be adored ;
 'Tis He must win the battle.

And were the world with devils filled,
 All eager to devour us,
 Our souls to fear should little yield,
 They cannot overpower us.
 Their dreaded prince no more
 Can harm us as of yore ;

Look grim as e'er he may,
Doom'd is his ancient sway,
A word can overthrow him.

Our confidence in God's ability to save and help us, the bold prayer of faith, "Awake, awake, put on thy strength, O arm of the Lord ; awake as in the ancient days, in the days of old," rests on this sure foundation that God is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. Moses when he led Israel out of Egypt,—their house of bondage,—had reached the fourscore years that David says prove to the few who attain such an age but labor and sorrow. For forty years thereafter he guides their wanderings through the desert, till, way-worn and weary, they reach the welcome borders of the Promised Land. They are to enter it ; but not he, though ere his eyes close in death he is to see it. For this purpose he is directed to climb the heights of Pisgah—a lofty mountain in Moab, whose top affords the spectator a wide though distant view of Palestine. But should our imaginations picture Moses as an aged man, stooping under the weight of years as, with many a breathing pause, he slowly takes his way up the steep, till, arrived at the summit, he falls exhausted on the ground or leans panting on his staff, and, while the mountain-breeze plays with his thin gray locks, strains his old eyes on the valleys of Canaan that stretch away to the horizon beyond the silver line of Jordan and gloomy waters of the Dead Sea, should we imagine this, our fancy were wide of the mark. Moses was now one hundred and twenty years old ; yet he climbed the heights and stood on the top of Pisgah, with an eye as bright, an arm as strong, a foot as fleet,

a bearing as erect and manly as when, forty years before, he bearded the lion in his den—the tyrant in his palace, and, boldly stepping into Pharaoh's hall, said, "Thus saith the Lord. . . Let my people go!" In the words of the wondrous story, "his eye was not dim, neither was his natural strength abated."

But in this Moses presented a singular exception to the common fate of men. A few years, and cares and sorrows write their wrinkles on man's brow; time sheds its snows on raven locks; the wheels of life get clogged with growing infirmities; manly strength turns into weakness, and wisdom perhaps into the drivelling of second childhood. And even where the power men possessed was, as it must necessarily have been in Moses' case, preternatural and miraculous, still the old adage holds true—"Times change and we change with them."

Take these two examples in illustration of that remark. First, the case of Samson, whose great strength saved his country from oppression, and struck terror into the boldest of his enemies. A lion meets him, and taking it by the jaws, he rends it like a young kid, asunder: sure of their prey, they shut him up in Gaza, and he wrenches off its ponderous gates, and, bearing them to a neighbouring hill-top, laughs his enemies to scorn: catching him to a disadvantage, the Philistines beset him, and, for lack of sword or battle-axe, seizing a jaw-bone that lies at his hand, he throws himself on their serried ranks, and, cutting down a man at every blow, leaves a thousand dead on the field. Yet see—his long locks lying on Delilah's floor,

and the harlot that betrayed him counting her ill-earned gains—Samson is led away bound, the laughing-stock of women and children. Now a poor, blinded prisoner making sport to the Philistines, how are the mighty fallen!—his hand is shortened that it cannot save. Then, for a second example, look at the disciples. On descending from the Mount of Transfiguration, our Lord finds them surrounded by an agitated crowd, who regard them with conflicting feelings; some with wonder, some with pity, some with sneering contempt. Endowed by their Master with miraculous powers, they had aforetime put them forth with success, and triumphed on many fields—they had opened the eyes of the blind; at their bidding dumb lips had spoken, the deaf had heard, wan, withered limbs had been restored to use; and without David's harp, or other charm than their great Master's name, they had dispossessed men of demons, and driven the foul fiends away. But now Jesus finds them humbled, mortified, put to shame before a crowd of onlookers. A father, whose ear their fame had reached and whose heart it had inspired with hope, brings to them his son—sore vexed with a devil. But it is to be bitterly disappointed. One after another, they try each holy art; but in vain. They name the name of Jesus. It avails not; and hope sinks in the father's heart as his son sinks yelling, foaming, convulsed and contorted at his feet. Like Samson when his hair was shorn, the disciples are as other men: their hand has lost its cunning—it is shortened that it cannot save. But, blessed be His name, it is never so with our God. What He has done, He can do again. So they that trust in the

Lord shall never be put to shame—their security for that standing in the very nature of God. He is unchanging and unchangeable. "I am the Lord," He says, "I am the Lord. I change not."

With what confidence, therefore, may we cast our burdens on Him whose mercy endureth for ever, whose grace faileth never. It is not with Him as it may be with other monarchs, other pastors, and other parents. There are monarchs whose dominions are more extensive than they can govern with advantage either to their subjects or to themselves—the influence of authority and of justice diminishing with distance, like that of the heart which, in persons of giant stature, as the slow circulation indicates, is always feeble at the extremities. There are ministers also in charge of flocks much more numerous than they can properly attend to; who, however conscientiously and diligently they labor to leave none neglected, find it as impossible to overtake all their duties as a man, let him run as he may, to overtake the horizon, which flies before him. Then there are many fathers who have more children than in hard times and circumstances they find it easy, or almost possible to support. Uncared for by thousands who fare sumptuously, and millions who fare comfortably, every day, there are sad homes in this world, where abject poverty curdles up the natural affections; and, leaving one mouth less to fill, the death of a child is regarded rather as the removal of a burden than the loss of a blessing. The ability of the wretched parents to support their offspring falls so far short at any rate of their wishes, it needs such a struggle to

keep body and soul together, that the poor infant is not always welcomed into the world ; and I have stood in bare, cold, unfurnished houses where no passage of Scripture could sound stranger in mortal ears than these beautiful words in theirs : " Thy children shall be like olive plants round about thy table. As arrows are in the hand of a mighty man, so are children of the youth. Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them."

Such melancholy spectacles, when saddest and most painful, have their uses. By way of contrast they set forth to the comfort of His believing people the ability that is in their God, even as the dull foil sets off the gem, and a murky storm-cloud the bow that spans it. For just as one day is with God as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day, it is the same to His infinite love, and power, and wisdom, and mercy, whether the objects of His care be one, or one thousand ; or, as is actually the case with the redeemed of God, a great company which no man can number. This is a lesson, for there are

Tongues in trees, books in the running brooks,
Sermons in stones, and good in everything

which we may read on the page of nature. Myriads of leaves clothe the forests, myriads of flowers bespangle the meadow, myriads of insects dance in the sunbeams, myriads of birds sing in the woodlands, myriads of fish swim in stream and ocean, myriads of stars glitter in the nightly sky, and every leaf is as perfect in form, every flower as beautiful in colors, every living creature fashioned with such skill, and every burning star guided

through space with as much care, as if it engrossed the entire attention of God, and there was not another but itself within the bounds of His universe. The number of objects our hearts can hold, or our arms embrace, or our eyes watch, or our fortunes enrich, or our bounty pension, is limited ; confined within a narrow range, is small at the largest and few at the most. It is not so with Him who is mighty to save, abundant in goodness and truth. The supplies of His grace and mercy are unexhausted and exhaustless. Their type shines in that sun which for six thousand years has shed its light on seas and continents, on crowded cities and lonely solitudes, on burning deserts and fields of ice, on palaces and cottages, on ragged beggars and sceptred kings, on all countries and classes of men, and with fires fed we know not how, shines to-day as bright as ever—his eye not dim, nor his natural strength abated. And as this is but an image, and a faint image, of God, well may His servant assure us, there shall be no want to them that fear Him. None—neither for the body nor the soul : neither for time nor eternity. Let us come boldly to the throne of grace. We cannot go to Him too often, nor ask of Him too much. We have no sin but He has a pardon for it ; no sore, but He has salve for it ; no weakness, but He has strength for it ; no cankering care, but He has relief for it ; no grievous sorrow, but He has comfort for it ; no bleeding heart-wound, but He has balm to soothe, and a bandage to bind it up. It is impossible for us to expect too much from His generosity, or trust too implicitly to the bounties of His providence and the aids of His

Spirit. It is equally easy for God to supply our greatest as our smallest wants, to carry our heaviest as our lightest burden—just as it is as easy for the great ocean to bear on her bosom a ship of war with all its guns and crew aboard, as a fisherman's boat, or the tiniest craft that floats, falling and rising on her swell. In the most desperate cases of sinners, and in the darkest circumstances of saints, "when all power is gone" and there seems no outlet or deliverance, God is mighty to save. Confident in His resources, He says, Is anything too hard for Me?—Prove Me herewith, if I will not open the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing till there is no room to contain—Who is he that feareth the Lord and obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light, let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay himself on his God.

The Believer's Reward.

RAYs of light, whether they proceed from sun, star, or candle, move in perfectly straight lines : yet so inferior are our works to God's, that the steadiest hand cannot draw a perfectly straight line ; nor, with all his skill, has man ever been able to invent an instrument capable of doing a thing apparently so simple. And it would seem to be as impossible for men to keep the even line of truth between what appear conflicting doctrines : such as the decrees of God and our free will ; such as election by grace and the universal offer of the gospel ; such as the justifying faith of Paul and the justifying works of James. For example, the claims of faith, though not wholly denied, have been disparaged by some in order to magnify the importance of good works : while others, going to the opposite extreme, have not sufficiently insisted on these. They have not assigned to good works their proper place, nor with apostolic earnestness urged Christians to be careful to maintain them ; lest they should appear to undervalue faith, and encourage sinners in the fatal error of trusting, not to the righteousness of Christ, but to works of righteousness which they themselves have done.

No such apprehensions should hinder a preacher from declaring "the whole counsel of God." Is his

topic faith in the righteousness of Jesus Christ as the Saviour of the lost, and only Mediator between God and man? Let him fully set forth that cardinal doctrine; abating and qualifying nothing; giving to this grace the prominence it received at the lips of Paul, when, to the jailor who had sprung into the dungeon, and fallen at his feet, to cry, O sirs! what shall I do to be saved? he replied, Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved. To no awakened, anxious, alarmed sinner have I any other answer. The question admits of none other. I would not limit the Holy One of Israel, nor venture to say what, in ordinary circumstances, was within, and what without the sphere of Divine power; but, looking at God in the character of a father, and judging of His feelings by my own, I cannot believe that He could have saved men otherwise than by the sacrifice of His Son. We are, as the Bible says, "shut up to Christ." So, with reverence be it spoken, in a sense was God. Had there been any other way, He would surely have chosen it. If He could, He would surely have spared His Son. Those who have studied His works know that, whether it be to roll a world through space, or only sustain an insect on the wing, God applies the exact amount of power necessary to accomplish His object; that, and no more than that. He wastes nothing; and if the works of creation afford no examples of His unnecessarily expending power or skill, how confident may we be that, in redeeming us, He did not unnecessarily shed the blood of His beloved Son; that by no sacrifice less precious than the life which Christ offered up on Calvary could man have

been saved, and righteous vengeance turned from our guilty heads. Without allowing the fear of its being abused to restrain him, or tone down his statements, the preacher is, therefore, to give Christ and the faith which receives his righteousness, their pre-eminent place. In making Jesus the centre of the whole system, in showing that there is no other name given under heaven whereby men can be saved but His, and how faith, not good works, is the way to Christ, and how Christ, not the Church or Sacraments, is the way to God, the preacher but declares in words what finds its most blest expression in the anthems and actions of the upper sanctuary. There, every harp is strung to Jesus' praise, and saints, descending from their celestial thrones, do homage for the crowns they wear by casting them at His pierced feet.

If good works, on the other hand, form the topic of discourse, the preacher is to be no less faithful in declaring the whole counsel of God respecting them. Man is not wiser than God. It is as much beyond our skill to improve the Gospel by putting things in a better or safer light, as to add beauty to a rose or lustre to the noon-day sun. Therefore, keeping nothing back, modifying and subtracting nothing, but telling the whole truth respecting them, we are to give good works the place which God himself has given them—no higher, yet no lower. And how full of honor and importance that place?—in that, though they do not justify us, they form the evidences of our justification; in that, though they do not awaken God's love to us, they are the welcome expressions of our love to Him; in that, though they do not, as rendering an

atonement for sin, pacify God, they please Him ; in that, though wrought by the power of His Spirit, and accepted through the merits of His Son, with their defects all overlooked for Jesus' sake, they shall receive a recompense in the kingdom of heaven.

Whoever, therefore, may be pouring water on a sand-bed, running their horses on a rock and ploughing there with oxen, beating the air and spending their strength for nought, giving their money for that which is not bread and their labor for that which profiteth not—it is not such as, in the words of the apostle, are “careful to maintain good works.” Engaging in these, we shall reap if we faint not. No pain suffered, nor service rendered, nor work done for Christ, is lost—the very shame we bear for Him shall be transformed into immortal laurels, and every tear shed like His over human sorrow, or hers who bent in penitence at His feet, shall be a pearl in the heavenly crown. The poorer we become for Christ, we shall grow the richer. The more we forget ourselves, the more will He remember us. Even a cup of cold water given to a disciple in the name of a disciple has the promise of a rich reward ; while, of all the saints in the kingdom of heaven, they shall shine brightest and sing loudest and enter in fullest measure into the joys of their Lord, whose life has most resembled His. Most blessed they that tread the closest on the steps of One who came not to be ministered unto, but to minister ; who spent His days going about doing good ; and whose life, till it closed in a bloody death, amply fulfilled the promise of its dawn, of His earliest recorded saying,

of this reply to Mary, "How is it that ye sought me? Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" "I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me," says St. John, "Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors; and their works do follow them."

His works often follow a good man in this world

Let me illustrate this by an example. An extensive tract of country in one of our distant colonies was occupied many years ago by forests, where the traveller found only the scantiest means of subsistence. It was inaccessible to all but the few savages who roamed its gloomy solitudes. It is no longer so. Beautiful and fruit-bearing trees now occupy the forest glades, and, providing abundance of nutritious food, have opened up the country to the foot of civilized man, and to its savage tribes the blessed influences of the Gospel. It was thus the change was brought about, as I have read or remember the story. Long years ago, there lived there a devout man, one who had left his native land, but not, like many others, the profession of its religion behind. Animated with love to Christ, and an eager desire to save souls, he was wont to leave the settlement and penetrate these forests to carry the Gospel to their wandering tribes. Ever aiming at doing good, nor confining himself, as is the habit of some, to one way of doing it, he sought, Christlike, to benefit the bodies as well as the souls of man. So, on leaving home, he was accustomed, beside his Bible, to carry a store of the stony seeds of those trees that now bless and

beautify the country ; and though, exposed to perish of famine or fall by the club of the savage, he might never live to see them blossom, ever and anon, as he emerged into a sunny glade, he planted a seed, leaving it to the care of God, the dews and showers of heaven. And now, though his bones have long mouldered into dust, in trees that bear beauty in their blossoms and life in their fruit, his works, done with prayer to God and from love to man, are still following him on earth. While others, who lived to enrich themselves and accumulate fortunes that have sunk amid the wreck of time, are forgotten, this good man's memory, like these trees, blossoms in perennial beauty. He has his name inscribed, not on a mouldering tombstone amid emblems of decay, but on the ever-living face of nature and on the hearts of grateful generations that sit under the shadow of his piety and enjoy its fruits.

Even so by labors accomplished in the spiritual field the Christian may live after he is dead. Leaving behind them works which shall continue for ages to preserve their memory and follow them here, many through their good words, though dead, are yet speaking ; through their good works, though dead, are yet working. There is no good work or word, indeed, but contains a germ of immortality, and may produce results God only has a mind to measure. Like the tiny stream which, small and shallow where it leaves its cradle, grows as it goes, till, fed by many tributaries, it at length swells into a river that, sweeping by the lands of many tribes, and bearing the sails of many nations on its bosom, like the Amazon or Mississippi, makes

its floods felt far out from shore—freshening the briny sea, good words have been spoken, and good works done that have grown from small beginnings into incalculable importance. Living through long periods of the world's history, they carry their blessed influences far beyond the land of their birth, even to the ends of the earth. In proof of this let me adduce two remarkable examples, namely, Sabbath Schools and the British and Foreign Bible Society.

Many cities claimed to be the birth-place of Homer, and, with a still more laudable ambition, England and Scotland are rivals for the honor of establishing the first Sunday-school. At the period of the Rebellion, one of the ministers of Brechin, an old cathedral town in Forfarshire, was a Mr. Blair, who left the mountain parish of Lochlee, where I write this, to fill that charge. He was a man who made his mark on the place and people; and though he has been dead a hundred years, they still tell stories of him as both a faithful minister of the Gospel, and a stout adherent of the house of Hanover. Tradition relates how on one occasion his courage equally astonished friend and foe. On a Sabbath-day, while he was preaching, the doors of the church were violently burst open, and in marched a body of Prince Charles's men; rebels armed to the teeth with target, claymore, dirk, and gun. They ordered Blair to stop. He heeded them not, but thundered on. Whereupon, to the terror of many and agitation of the whole congregation, two officers mounted the pulpit stairs and, each laying a pistol on the cushion to enforce their orders, again they commanded him to stop.

Little disposed to yield obedience to any civil authority in the things of God and within His house, and least of all to that of rebels in arms for a Popish prince, the preacher heard them as if he heard them not. He boldly went on with his discourse. They might fire away, but he would neither yield to their threats, nor own their authority. At length the provost, who was Blair's brother-in-law, dreading that they would shoot him dead on the spot, rose from his seat, which was opposite the pulpit, and bade him stop. "No," replied the intrepid preacher, as with his arms he pushed the pistols from the cushion on to the floor, "No; I would not stop though the devil and all his angels were here." Whereupon, as the story goes, the highlandmen, judging it not well, or perhaps safe, to proceed to extremities with a man whom they might kill but could not conquer, gathered up their pistols, and walked off, leaving our hero in quiet possession of the field. This is the man to whom I believe those Sunday-schools which cover the Christian world like a vast network, owe their origin. The traveller whose curiosity may lead him to visit that old cathedral, less for its sake than for the old round tower that stands there the graceful monument of an older and purer faith than Popery, will find a marble tablet on the wall to the memory of Blair, where he may read that, "*Mr. Blair, about the year 1760, instituted a Sabbath evening school, the first it is believed that was opened in Scotland.*"

But whether Blair or Raikes was first inspired with the happy thought, or whether, as has not unfrequently happened in scientific discoveries,

each, independently of the other, was led to the same result, in the multitudes of children Sunday-schools have been the means of saving, in the millions they are blessing throughout the Christian world, how do the good works of their founders follow them here! Living to the noblest and most enduring purposes, they indeed have left "their footprints on the sands of time." Seated on a throne which was already shaking beneath him, with a cloud darkening his royal brow, and remorse, like a worm, gnawing at his heart, King Solomon gave utterance to this melancholy soliloquy, "I made me great works—whatever mine eyes desired, I kept not from them—I withheld not my heart from any joy. Then I looked on all the works that my hands had wrought, and on the labor that I had labored to do, and behold all was vanity and vexation of spirit. There was no profit under the sun!" With other feelings the founders of Sunday-schools bend from heaven to look on the work of their hands. As they look down from their thrones on the millions of little children gathered, bright and happy, every Sunday, into these schools, and as they listen to catch the hymns of their young voices floating up through the skies to mingle with the songs of angels, and as they see many an opening flower bathed with the dews of early grace, and transplanted from these nurseries of a stormy world to bloom out in the paradise of God, how, were it right to envy any, might the greatest of earth's great ones envy them! Blessed indeed are the dead that die in the Lord; they rest from their labors, and their works do follow them!

The British and Foreign Bible Society supplies another, and not less remarkable, example. Briefly told, this is the story of its origin. A devout Welsh minister who was accustomed to converse familiarly with his flock, meeting a little girl on a Monday morning, asked her to repeat the text of the preceding day. She could not ; and, blushing, to his surprise laid the blame on the snow that lay in heavy wreaths by the hedge-rows and deep on all the hills around. It had prevented her, as she explained, from going to a distant cottage to which she was wont to repair to learn the text from a Bible there. This simple incident led to an important inquiry. The good man found, to his grief and dismay, that many of the families around had no copy of the Word of God. As remarkable for energy as piety, he set off at once for London to get a society formed for the purpose of supplying his poor countrymen with the Scriptures. For this end he appealed to the directors of the Religious Tract Society ; nor in vain. A few of these good men, one of them being William Wilberforce, quietly assembled in an obscure counting-room in one of the densest parts of the city to hear his proposal. They agreed to it ; and were about to disperse when, like a sunbeam breaking from the clouds, and streaming through the dusty panes to light up the dingy room, a bright thought flashed into the mind of one of them. He rose to say what associates that humble counting-room with the stable of Bethlehem, and redeeming it for ever from obscurity, has made it the honored birthplace of a society which, the glory of Britain and the world, has sent forth hundreds of millions

of Bibles in hundreds of different tongues : "If a Bible society for Wales," he said, "why not a Bible Society for the world?" Brief, but most pregnant question ! It sounded on their ears like a voice from heaven. It was felt to be the very question He would have put, who embraced the whole world in His arms, and baptized it with His blood. Breathing His spirit, and commanding itself to theirs, the proposal was at once, and cordially, assented to. Recalling more than any speech that ever dropped from mortal lips the creating fiat, *Let there be light, and there was light* —that blessed question, that brave proposal of Christian faith, has chased away the darkness of many lands, and illumined with the knowledge of saving truths the uttermost parts of the earth. This is the greatest speech on record. Though dead, he yet speaketh who said it. Nor could any, leaving those busy presses that are throwing off Bibles by millions in many different tongues, stand by his grave without feeling that he who sleeps below was distinguished among those of whom it can be said, "their works do follow them." It is the privilege of few to achieve works of corresponding magnitude and usefulness. Such honors have not all God's saints. One star differeth from another star in glory. Yet there is not a humble cottager who is training her child for God ; nor servant who, with an eye to His glory, bends to the meanest work ; nor widow who, out of her poverty, casts her humble offering into His treasury ; nor any, in life's obscurest lot, who are trying to do good, to help the helpless and relieve distress, to heal a wounded heart, to smooth a thorny pillow,

to bring a soul to Jesus, to turn a sinner to God, to restore a backslider, or to raise the fallen, but is engaged in a work that, though it may leave no trace on earth, shall follow them through the vale of death to receive a recompence of reward.

His works always follow a good man to heaven.

Many of our countrymen leave home and, undergoing a voluntary exile, take their way to India or other distant climes. Their object is to make a fortune ; and the hope that lures them on, often to a life of privations and an early death, is that they shall return to pass the evening of their days in the enjoyment of ease and affluence. According to the store people set on wealth, and show, and sumptuous living, and expensive pleasures, will this conduct be considered wise or foolish. Men may entertain different opinions on that matter, but all, with one consent, will pronounce him a fool who, after making a fortune abroad, leaves it there, to return as poor as he went away ; poorer, indeed, with enfeebled health, a shattered constitution, and few friends surviving to welcome the wanderer back, and cheer his dull old age. Asking for what purpose he banished himself, toiled, and wasted his prime and manhood, people would pronounce such conduct to be arrant folly. Yet thousands whom the world esteems wise commit a greater folly, nor is there any walk of life but is thronged with still greater fools—with thousands who toil and struggle, scrape and save, rise up early and lie down late and eat the bread of sorrow, to gain what only adds to the bitterness of that inevitable hour when they must leave all behind. Naked man comes from his mother's womb, and stripped

of all his wealth and honors, naked he returns thither. What is money to the dead ; or fame ; or fulsome eulogies ; or the pomp of a funeral which interests all but him whose cold clay it mocks with empty honors ? The plaudits of the world wake no echoes in the tomb ; nor can all the glittering objects which so many eagerly, and some exclusively, pursue, either add in the smallest measure to the happiness of the saved, or abate in the least degree the miseries of the lost. All the grandeur and the good things of this world must be left behind : and how do they waste life's golden hours who spend them in pursuing objects they gain but to lose, and possess but for a little to part with for ever ! More free of care and sin, much happier, and not more foolish, is yonder group of laughing children, that build castles of sand within the tide mark, or, seated on a sunny bank, crown their fair brows with garlands of wild withering flowers.

The value of all works may be proved by this very simple test—will they follow us ? Accompanying us out of this world, will they go with us into the next ? That only is of real value to a man which he can carry with him. A touchstone that, which neither gold, nor houses, nor broad acres, nor sounding titles, nor household comforts, can stand ! With ruthless hand death strips all alike ; nor is it true that one dies poor, and another rich. All die equally poor, the results of death being as impartial as its pains. It is as hard to expire with kings amid silken curtains and on a bed of down, as with beggars in a barn on a pallet of straw ; and indeed, I have thought that death, with its filmy eye, and restless head, and panting breath,

and pinched, pallid face, looked to the full as terrible in the gilded halls of nobles as in the barest cabins of the poor. "There is one event to all," says the wise man; and the question of true importance touching the dead is not the common one, What have they left?—but this, What have they carried away?

"Blessed are they that do his commandments. Witnesses in their favor, though not the price of His, their works of faith and love and piety shall go up with them to the judgment; and there they shall have the happiness to find that, while God has forgiven all their sins—the greatest of them, He has forgotten none, even the least of their services. He who puts His people's tears into His bottle, writes their good works in His book. "A book of remembrance," the prophet says, "was written before him for them that feared the Lord and that thought upon his name; and they shall be mine, saith the Lord of Hosts, on that day when I make up my jewels: and I will spare them as a man spareth his own son that serveth him." Unanswered as some may have appeared, all the prayers they ever offered, lost as many seemed to be, all the labors they endured, and all the scorn they bore, and all the good fights they fought, and all the fidelity they showed in the cause of Christ, He shall remember and reward. The bread they cast on the waters shall return when Jesus, putting into their hands a golden harp and on their heads a shining crown, bids them welcome to the glory of the skies, saying, Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord!

The prospect of this may well raise saints above

the fear of death. The dread of it is instinctive, a feeling common to all men—common, as the flight of deer before the hounds, the silence of the groves when thunder peals or the hawk screams in the sky, the efforts of a poor worm to wriggle out of our way, show indeed to all living creatures. In some, no doubt, this instinct is stronger than in others. There have been bad men who could calmly confront death, sleeping like a happy child the night before their execution, and marching to the scaffold with head erect, and cheek unblanched, and step firm as his who brushes the dew from heather or flowery sward. On the other hand, some of God's people, though they had no reason to fear the issue, have shrunk from death with an unconquerable horror, and under its fear have been all their lifetime subject to bondage. Nor do such feelings always spring from a dread of the pain of dying. It is certain that a man shot through the heart or beheaded, dies before he has time to feel ; and more certain still that the stroke of lightning is instantaneous, and must be painless —the victim being dead as a stone before he can see the flash which kills him ; yet where the good hope through grace is conjoined with a great natural horror of death, no demonstration of that kind will tranquillize the mind amid the peals and flashes of a thunder-storm. Besides this instinctive dread, the ordinary accompaniments of death are such as, apart from the consolations of the Gospel, cast dismal shadows on the valley sin dooms all to travel. Pain is a feature common both to birth and death. It is with groans we leave a world that we enter with a cry : nor has it any sounds so

terrible as a man's last gasping breaths, or sight so appalling as his struggles in the arms of death. And even when the curtain falls on the awful scene, and silence succeeds to groans ; and the restless form lies in repose, and the expression of pain has passed from the pale placid face, and all is over, how do our hearts recoil from that grave amid whose darkness and corruption loved ones, whose voices we shall no more hear and whose faces we shall no more see, are mouldering into dust ? This skeleton form, the dread messenger whom sin has armed with a dart and the great God sends to summon mortals to his judgment-bar, is indeed the King of Terrors.

Does a believer, or rather should a believer, then fear to die ? Paul answers the question. See him there, as, longing to depart, he stretches out his wings to go, esteeming it better to be absent from the body and present with the Lord ; or on yonder battle-field, where, with his foot on our last enemy and triumph in his tones, he bends down to taunt and to defy him, saying, O death, where is thy sting ? Thanks be to God, who giveth me the victory through my Lord Jesus Christ !

Fear to die ? The Apostle knew in whom he had believed. He was persuaded that neither death nor life, nor things present nor things to come, should be able to separate him from the love of God which was through Jesus Christ. He had a full assurance that the blessed Master whom he had lived, and was about to die, to serve, would receive him to His glorious rest. Never bond-slave longed for emancipation, or pining captive for

green fields and home, or soldier weary of war for his discharge, or weather-beaten mariner, as he lay on the helm battling with rude seas and roaring tempests, for a quiet harbor, more than Paul for death ; to depart and be with Jesus. And since it is at death the servant, having ended his task, receives his wages ; the soldier, having closed his battles, obtains the crown ; the pilgrim, having finished his journey, is welcomed to his Father's house, and enters into rest : how much more common were the hopes and peace and triumph of Paul, did Christians labor more diligently to make their calling and election sure. Many more might die offering in the manner of their death the greatest sermon that was ever preached, the grandest spectacle that can be seen on earth. Peace enjoyed amid such terrors and distractions is a spectacle to turn aside the steps of Moses. Here is a bush burning, yet not consumed. It was a sight worth seeing, when the young shepherd stood by the giant's vast form, with his foot planted on his neck, and mothers and maidens, conducting him from the field of a glorious victory, sang his praises to the timbrel and the dance ; but it is a spectacle more glorious still to see a dying saint treading death and the devil beneath his feet, in the sublime power of faith conquering all mortal and guilty fears, calmly awaiting the hour of departure, comforting the mourners who weep around his bed, and with a placid smile bidding the world adieu. Amid such scenes faith achieves her grandest triumphs. There, the infidel has felt compelled to do her homage ; and has been heard to say, on leaving the field of such a victory, May

I die the death of the righteous, and may my last end be like his !

Fear to die ? There is enough in the prospects which faith opens up to raise a man out of himself, and render him insensible alike to the feeling of pain and the fears of death. Even those feelings which are commonly feeble may, being roused, undergo such change and acquire such power as a mountain brook, that, ordinarily murmuring along its stony channel of little pools and tiny waterfalls, when thunders shake the heavens and roll among the hills, swells into a torrent which, dashing, roaring, foaming along its rugged course, sweeps everything before it. Look, for example, at the bird to whose protecting wings our Lord compares His own fond kindness ! See how bravely, though by nature timid, she defends her helpless brood, and ruffles her feathers to spring in the face of man or beast. The maternal affection, roused by a sense of danger, takes entire possession of her heart, and imparts to it the courage of a lion. Even the love of science—a passion, if as pure, commonly as cold as a wintry sky—has overmastered the fears of death. Archimedes calmly pursued his studies in Syracuse amid the uproar of the assault ; nor when a soldier, with murderous weapon and intent, burst into his apartment, asked other favor at his hand but a few more minutes to finish the problem he was engaged in solving. Even less noble and exalted passions may become equally absorbing. A Roman army once fought with such enthusiasm as to be insensible to an earthquake that rocked the ground beneath their feet ; and I knew a soldier who, with the foe before

him and comrades falling at his side was raised so much above the sense of pain as never to discover that a ball from the French had shattered his wrist, till he found himself unable to fire off the musket he had levelled at their ranks.

No wonder, therefore, that the prospects of dying saints should sometimes lift them above themselves. A clear eye and a cloudless sky, his home full in view, heaven at hand, through the gate that opens to receive him Jesus seen amid the glories of His Father's throne with a crown ready to place on His servant's brows, these are sufficient to account for the comfort and courage with which many have not merely met, but welcomed their dying day—to account, without calling in miraculous agency, for what we read in old books, how some, going to martyrdom with dauntless mien and face radiant as on a marriage day, have felt no pain at the burning stake, and sung out their life amid the roar of fire. Let a dying man enjoy a clear view of his interest in Christ, and an unclouded prospect of the rest and reward that remaineth for His people, and the last should be the happiest hours of his life. Of such a life it may well be said, "the end is better than the beginning." Thus one of our Scottish martyrs, standing on the ladder from which they were to throw him off, assured the weeping spectators that he had never gone up to his pulpit to preach with so little fear as he had mounted that ladder to die—to him it was a perch from which his spirit, wearied of a world full of sin and sorrows, was spreading out its joyful wings for the flight to heaven. Another, addressing his weeping mother and sisters, who had entered his cell

for a last visit on the morning of his execution, said, "Let us be glad and rejoice, for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. Could I have ever thought that the fear of suffering and death could be so taken from me? Lord!" he exclaimed, "Thou hast brought me within two hours of eternity, and this is no matter of terror to me more than if I rose to go to lie down on a bed of roses: now that I am so near the end of time, I desire to bless the Lord: death is to me as a bed to the weary! Yonder," he remarked on hearing the drums beat for his execution, "yonder is my welcome call to the marriage. The Bridegroom is coming. I am ready!" Assured, as he said, by God of his salvation, with these sublime words he left the world to pass within the veil—"Farewell, beloved fellow-sufferers and followers of the Lamb. Farewell, night-wanderings for Christ and all sublunary things. Farewell, conflicts with a body of sin and death. Welcome, scaffold, for precious Christ. Welcome, heavenly Jerusalem. Welcome, innumerable company of angels. Welcome, crown of glory. Welcome, above all, thou blessed Trinity and one God. O Eternal One, I commit my soul unto thy eternal rest." What a glorious sunset of a stormy day! What a commentary that scene on these grand words of Paul—"DEATH IS SWALLOWED UP IN VICTORY. O DEATH, WHERE IS THY STING? O GRAVE, WHERE IS THY VICTORY? THE STING OF DEATH IS SIN: AND THE STRENGTH OF SIN IS THE LAW. BUT THANKS BE TO GOD, WHICH GIVETH US THE VICTORY THROUGH OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST. THEREFORE, MY BELOVED BRETHREN, BE YE

STEADFAST, IMMOVABLE, ALWAYS ABOUNDING IN THE WORK OF THE LORD, FORASMUCH AS YE KNOW THAT YOUR LABOR IS NOT IN VAIN IN THE LORD."

Good Works.

THOSE bodies of ours which the Psalmist pronounces, and science the more they are studied the more clearly proves, to be fearfully and wonderfully made, God has furnished with many different organs. Among them all, there is none useless, or to be dispensed with. Each has its own peculiar and also important office—on the due performance of which our health depends in all cases, and in some our life. Let any of them cease to discharge, or but imperfectly discharge, its functions, and in course of time, not it only, but the whole body suffers. For, though functional are less alarming than organic affections, the irregular action of any organ is apt to run into disease ; and disease after a longer or shorter period of suffering, to terminate in general disorder ; and that at length in death. Such is the perfect harmony between the different parts of our frame that they all sympathize with, and, for pleasure, health, and even life itself, are mutually dependent on each other. A somewhat similar dependence characterizes all the true members of Christ's body—His Church, by whatever name they go, to whatever class or order they belong. An important fact that ! —nor could anything better prove the high importance which St. Paul attaches to it, than the

striking manner in which he thus insists on, and expands it : "By one Spirit," he says, "are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free ; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit. . . . If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body ; is it, therefore, not of the body ? And if the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body ; is it, therefore, not of the body ? If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing ? if the whole were hearing, where were the smelling ? If they were all one member, where were the body ? But now are they many members, yet but one body ! And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee ; nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you. . . . Whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it ; or one member be honored, all the members rejoice with it. Ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular."

This beautifully drawn analogy between the members of Christ's body and those of our material frame teaches many lessons ; and among these, not the least important is this, that we become members of His body not for ornament merely, nor even for our salvation and enjoyment only, but also for work. Activity is the universal characteristic of all life, human and Divine. God himself offers no exception to this rule : "My Father worketh hitherto," says Jesus, "and I work :" nor on the other hand, does it find an exception even in those animals or plants that stand lowest in the scale of Creation. But take an example from our own bodies. In what respect are they encumbered with

useless or idle members? The hands are formed to work, the feet to walk, the eyes to look, the ears to listen, the tongue to taste, the teeth to grind and the digestive organs to extract nourishment from our food, the lungs to breathe, the brain to feel and think, and the heart—the first to live and last to die, and greatest worker of all—to beat by night and day without a pause; supplying the waste of every organ, and sending its tide of blood to the extremities of the body. And, as in camp, followers, or armor, or baggage, what does not promote impairs the efficiency of an army; as in a household those who do not help hinder work, if the body through accident or monstrous birth has a limb that is of no service, it is considered an incumbrance rather than an advantage. Regarded as a deformity, not an ornament, it is removed; when the operation can be safely performed, it is condemned to the surgeon's knife. So is it with Christ's body—that Church of the living God which He has purchased with His blood. By whatever hands they were baptized, to whatever Communion they professedly belong, let none fancy that they belong to Christ, unless they are found working in His service. For them to talk of being saved by faith is to dishonor the Gospel, and to deceive themselves. Faith without works, as James plainly tells us, is dead; and like all dead things, is an offence.

Yet, if there is need to warn some against trusting to their own works for salvation or fixing their hopes on any but the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sins of the world, there is probably as much need to warn others against a more

pleasant but equally fatal error—this, namely, that they can be true without being working Christians. There is a sloth and self-indulgence which, divorcing what God hath joined together—faith and works, peace and penitence, the spirit and the enjoyment of heaven—trusts to be saved without an effort ; to receive the reward without undergoing the labor, the crown without bearing the cross. If words have any meaning, how plainly opposed to this delusion these weighty exhortations !—labor for the bread that never perisheth ; give all diligence to make your calling and election sure ; work out your salvation with fear and trembling ; pray without ceasing ; watch unto prayer ; be instant in season and out of season ; work while it is called to-day, for the night cometh when no man can work ; the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force ; if any man will be my disciple let him take up his cross, deny himself daily, and follow me ; if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off and cast it from thee, for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell ; and if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out and cast it from thee, for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell. Liars, thieves, drunkards, adulterers, murderers, the vilest of impenitent sinners are not more certain to be lost than those decent persons who do nothing for Christ, flattering themselves that a worthless and a workless faith shall save them. Their peace is false ; and one could fancy that the prophet had them, and the day that shall

judge us all not by our professions but performances, in his eye, when he says : " Because they have seduced my people, saying, Peace, and there was no peace ; and one built up a wall, and, lo, others daubed it with untempered mortar : say unto them which daub it with untempered mortar, that it shall fall. . . . Thus saith the Lord God : I will even rend it with a stormy wind in my fury ; and there shall be an overflowing shower in mine anger, and great hailstones in my fury to consume it. . . . Thus will I accomplish my wrath upon the wall, and upon them that have daubed it with untempered mortar, and will say unto you, The wall is no more, neither they that daubed it." Alas ! deeming it an easy thing to gain heaven, they shall be buried in the ruin of hopes it was folly ever to entertain, and shall then be too late to amend. The night has come when no man can work. From a fate so sad, yet so certain, if, living for enjoyment rather than employment we neglect the arduous duties of this great salvation, may the good Lord deliver us !

It is impossible to set too high a value on the blood of Christ. It cleanseth from all sin, and it only cleanseth from any. Washed in it the greatest sinner shall be saved ; without it, the least of sinners must be lost. To a poor guilty man, suffering the stings of conscience and standing in terror of death and the judgment, it is better than gold, yea, than much fine gold ; the pearl of great price, which he would sell all, and, were he possessed of a thousand worlds, would part with them all to buy. It is equally impossible, on the other hand, to undervalue the worth of our

own works. Till we are reconciled to God, and, born again through His Spirit, have become new creatures in Jesus Christ, we are His enemies. Our works do not spring from love to Him, and therefore cannot have any value in His eyes. And how imperfect are even the best works of the best saints! There is foulness enough in the purest heart, and, in respect of their motives, manner, and object, sin enough in our best actions,—those whereby we do most good and earn most commendation, to condemn us. To speak of us not in our worst but best state, not of the sins we commit, but of the best services we render, our wine has its water and our silver has its dross. And so, abandoning every hope of acceptance with a holy God through our own merits, let us cling to the cross of Christ, as a drowning man to the plank that, embraced in his arms, floats him to the shore; the language of our faith an echo of His who breathed out His life with these words on His lips, None but Christ, none but Christ!

Still, I question whether good works are held in sufficient value by many whom notwithstanding we must regard as sincere Christians—a state of mind theirs that cannot be approved, and yet can without much difficulty be accounted for. Whoever reflects on the spherical form of the earth will perceive that a traveller going east may continue his journey in that direction till, passing round half the globe, he is on the west of us. He has, in fact, by advancing very far on one and the same line, exactly reversed his position. And just as a man, if he goes very far east, gets

into the west, so there is always a danger lest, in our anxiety to avoid one error, we go so far in the opposite direction as to fall into another. Almost all religious, to say nothing of other controversies, illustrate this fact. The longer they rage, the fiercer grow the passions which they kindle, and the more extreme the positions which the combatants, carried away by their feelings, are apt to assume.

For example, the Reformation in Scotland, which, in contradistinction to that of England, was opposed by the whole power of the crown and owed little to the nobles, was, under God and the few distinguished leaders He raised for the occasion, a popular movement. The people had a hard fight of it, and the people fought it well. They made, to use one of their own favorite expressions, "root and branch" work of the demolition of Popery. Still, this Reformation presented to some degree an example of the tendency that men show to pass from one extreme to another, especially when borne along on the crest of a popular wave. This cannot fairly be denied, I think; and will be denied by none but those who admire our Reformers well, but not wisely; who seem to claim for them an infallibility which they denied to the Pope, nor ever thought of claiming for themselves. However justifiable and commendable such movements may be, they commonly present, with its irresistible power, more or less of the violence of a river which, swollen high with rains, not only clears its channel of the impediments that obstruct its progress, but also in various places undermines its own banks, and hurls away in its impetuous, red

roaring flood the soil that fertilizes, and the trees that adorn them.

I will yield to no man in a high and just admiration of the principles, the piety, the energy, the sagacity, and the heroic courage of the Scottish Reformers. Events have justified almost everything for which they were once condemned. Yet I cannot but think that in their devout abhorrence of a sensuous and formal religion, they somewhat overlooked the aid a spiritual worship may receive from forms, if these are in harmony with a devout mind and the apostolic rule, "Let all things be done decently and in order." We sympathize with the zeal with which they stripped the Church of meretricious ornaments ; but they might have substituted for the gorgeous vestments and heathenish trappings of Popery what would have seemed in some respects a less scanty and mean attire. There is no sin in beauty, nor holiness in ugliness. God adorns all His works, painting even the flowers of the field, and bathing their leaves in delicious fragrance. And why then need it have been thought almost a sin to introduce music into His service that gratified the ear, or meet for His worship but within the cold bare walls of a mean and naked edifice? Many things, indeed, have been unjustly laid to the charge of our fathers. Knox and his coadjutors were not the rude, uncultivated men their enemies represented them, and some, giving too ready credence to Popish lies, believed them to have been. It is not to cast blame on them, but to illustrate our proneness to pass to extremes, that I have touched a small fault—one it is easy to extenuate. For what

surgeon so skilful as to remove a monstrous excrecence without his knife taking some flesh along with it? or what vast tree, the growth of centuries, was ever uprooted but it injured the green-sward, and tore up some good soil in the meshes of its gigantic roots?

Our tendency to run into extremes finds no less striking and more sad illustrations in the doctrinal positions which good men have allowed themselves to be driven into by the violence of controversy and the natural recoil from error. In their zeal to put down one error they have often fallen into another—to use Archbishop Whately's favorite adage, going too far east, they have gone into the west. Of this we have a remarkable example in the positions in which Wesley and Toplady were found at the end of their controversy. Eminently good men, whose names are still fragrant and whose praise is in all the churches, at the commencement of their controversy the first appeared as the champion of a moderate Arminianism, the second of a moderate Calvinism. But ere that unhappy war had spent its vehemence, Wesley in his recoil from Toplady's Calvinism, and the other in his recoil from Wesley's Arminianism, had each taken up positions, and ventured on statements, which in their calmer moments neither of them would have approved or defended.

If traced to its source, the secondary place given to good works by many, and even by some good and sincere Christians in their creed, if not in their conduct, will also be found, I think, to arise from our proneness to pass from one extreme

to another. The Church of Rome taught her people to recommend themselves to the favor of God by good works, as she calls them—fastings and watchings, gifts of charity to the poor and of piety to the church, lives of voluntary poverty, and various acts of painful penance. Her Suspension Fund is the doctrine of purgatory : and, notwithstanding the ostentatious parade she makes of cross and crucifix, her principle, to all practical intents and purposes, is salvation by works. This appears in every country where, removed from the restraining influences of Protestantism, her character, like a plant growing in its native soil, is fully developed. There only, Popery is seen aright ; as is the lion in the desert he shakes with his cruel roar, or the tiger in the Indian jungles through which, crashing like a bolt, she makes her fatal spring : not in those menageries where, confined within iron bars and subdued by hunger, these savage beasts, but occasionally growling, quietly pace their narrow bounds, and cower beneath the keeper's eye.

For example, in a cathedral, far south in Italy, I saw a man working out his “salvation with fear and trembling.” It was done under the eye of his priests ; but in a manner hardly less offensive, I suppose, to Him who is to be worshipped in spirit and in truth than the pagan rites of those temples whose graceful ruins stood near by, on the shores of the blue Mediterranean and under the shadow of the snow-crowned Apennines. It was morning mass ! and with only its loftiest windows touched by the beams of the rising sun, the cathedral of Salerno was filled with a solemn

gloom—a dim, religious light. With an attention to their religious duties that might put many Protestants to the blush, domestic servants leaving the family a-bed, and humble laborers on their way to field or workshop, were there—praying, with their eyes turned on a crucifix, or more probably on their knees either before an image of the Virgin, or the shrine that held the mouldering relics of their patron saint. Arrayed in gorgeous robes, muttering prayers, like incantations, in an unknown tongue, and attended by boys with smoking censers and tinkling bells, some priests were already officiating at the altars; while others, carrying the Host—the true body of our Lord, as they say—were passing with grave and solemn pomp across the marble floor to begin their services for the living or the offices of the dead. But from all this mummery and imposing array, my attention was turned on an object that filled me with mingled feelings of indignation, pity, and astonishment. An old man, bent under the weight of years, entered. Having dipped his finger in the holy water by the door, and crossed himself with trembling hand in the name of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, he advanced with a slow and tottering step to the centre of the church. There, under the eye of passing and approving, or careless and indifferent priests, he cast himself on the floor. Prostrate on his hands and knees, he bowed till his lips kissed, and his forehead touched the pavement. A posture his of deepest reverence; and yet but the prelude of an act painful to see and more painful to reflect on, as a degrading and soul-destroying superstition. In this prostrate

posture he protruded his tongue ; and, with his long grey locks sweeping the dirty floor, crawled forward on hands and knees ; and, as he crawled, with bleeding tongue he licked the marble pavement, till he had drawn among its dust a large, long figure of the cross. Thus, poor, pitiable, ignorant devotee, he was taught to earn the pardon of his sins ! If he had ever heard, how did he misunderstand these grand words, "God forbid that I should glory save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world !" But thus, by prayers and penances, by fasts and vigils, and some things, otherwise commendable, which Popery calls *good works*, she teaches, and has always taught, that men may earn the mercy of God and purchase a right to heaven.

By putting them in the place of Christ, His righteousness, and saving work, Popery brought good works into bad odor—into such disrepute, indeed, that even Martin Luther, because St. James highly commended them, rejected his epistle from the canon of inspired Scripture. In their recoil from her errors, men appeared at the period of the Reformation who burst asunder the bounds of all morality. Denouncing the doctrine of good works as a delusion of Satan and an encroachment on the freedom wherewith Christ makes His people free, they openly indulged in the grossest vices ; saying, that with their "life hid with Christ in God," these polluted them no more than the gutter does the kernel inside the nut which falls into it. Nor has Rome only taught that salvation is more of works than of faith. Last century

saw a sad eclipse of sound doctrine in almost all Protestant churches. Their pulpits were occupied by men who, ignorant of the truth, or ashamed to own their Lord and to defend His cause, discoursed a cold morality; fed the people with empty husks; and putting good works, as they called them, in the place of the cross, held up heathen virtues rather than Christ and Christian graces to admiration. And under that law of action and reaction which makes the human mind, as well as a pendulum, swing from one extreme to the opposite, the result was what might have been expected. From being over-valued, good works came to be under-valued; theirs the fate of the brazen serpent, which, from being an object of idolatry, was treated with a measure of contempt—ground to powder, and called Nehushtan, or a piece of brass. I cannot otherwise explain the carelessness which many display about Christian works, and the hopes they entertain of getting to heaven without having ever given such proofs of conversion as they afford. Nor can I otherwise account for the positive aversion which some good people show, not certainly to doing, but to hearing of good works. So morbid is this feeling, that they would suspect the orthodoxy of the preacher who assigned them a prominent place in his sermons. St. Paul says, “Be ye followers of me;” but would they venture, lest they should puff up any, or encourage them to trust in their own merits, to follow him in the style in which he closes his epistle to the Romans? Bold and generous man, he commends Phebe by name and others also for their works; in anticipation

of Christ's own "Well done," he applauds their services, and, recording their names in the imperishable pages of the Bible, crowns them with immortal honor.

It is told, for example, of an eminent saint, how, on one who sat by his dying bed delicately alluding to important services which he had rendered to the cause of religion, he started—started as if he had heard a serpent hiss ; and turning round with an expression of pain and horror on his face, besought his friend, as he loved him, to make no mention of his poor unworthy works. And I have seen it recorded to the praise of another, as indicating the healthiest and holiest state a man could live or die in, that to those who spoke of his good works, he instantly replied, "I take my good and bad works, and casting them into one heap, fly from both to Christ !" Now, though seeing in our best works much to make us blush, and nothing whatever, since it is by grace we are what we are, to make us vain, I venture to say that good works, by which I mean, works done for the glory of the Father, from love to the Son, and by the aid of the Holy Spirit, deserve a more respectful treatment. It is the exaggeration of a right feeling, and a false humility which casts them into the same heap with our sins. Our trust for pardon and acceptance should rest entirely in the blood of Christ ; yet the works which have pleased our heavenly Father and profited our fellow-creatures, are to be recalled with thankfulness on a dying bed. Fruits of the Spirit, which glorify not us, but Him through whose grace they have been wrought, they are clear and comfortable evidence of our being the children of God.

It was not thus, as some have done, that Paul spoke of good works. It may be news to many, yet it is true, that he applies the same lofty terms to them which he uses to proclaim and enforce salvation by the blood of Christ. To Timothy he says, "*This is a faithful saying*, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners ;" and to Titus he says, employing not an equivalent but the identical expression, "*This is a faithful saying*, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works." On death-beds, on the deck, wherever loved ones tear themselves from each other's arms, at all partings, the last are not the least important words ; and it is with exhortations to good works that Paul takes farewell of the church of Philippi. "Finally, brethren," he says, "whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report : if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things." Elsewhere, placing good works on a yet loftier platform, in language the strongest possible according them yet higher honors, he says, "God is *not unrighteous* to forget our work and labor of love showed toward his name :" and, after that, it were surely no presumption to say that it cannot be wrong for us modestly to remember what God will not forget : and further still, that it cannot be right for us to be careless of such works as this great preacher of faith says are ordained of God, and bids us be careful to maintain.

Who ponders the Apostle's words aright, and forms a proper estimate of their importance, will be less surprised than some, no doubt, are at the manner in which Nehemiah mentions his good works in his prayers. Addressing God, he speaks of them in a way which many good men never ventured on. When counselled to fly, he spurned the coward advice : and asking, Shall such a man as I flee ? against the enemies of his God, his faith, his country, and his countrymen—

stood like an iron pillar strong
And steadfast as ■ wall of brass.

But some who admire the boldness with which, amid a crowd of enemies, he faces man, may think his bearing before God over bold ; and that he trode the borders of presumption—when, relating his pious and patriotic deeds, he addresses Jehovah, saying, “ Wipe not out my good deeds that I have done for the house of my God, and for the offices thereof ! ” Did such a thought occur to them when engaged in prayer, many would strangle it in their hearts—regarding it as a suggestion of the devil ; a temptation to be resisted, if not a sin to be mourned ; as only suited to the lips of one who distributed his alms to the sound of a trumpet, and prayed in corners of the street that he might be praised of men, and said, expressing the sentiments of a heart inflated with pride, I thank thee, O God, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican ! Yet when Nehemiah prayed, “ Remember me, O God, concerning this,” he only asked him to remember what Paul assures us God is not so unrighteous as to

forget. He was no proud, self-righteous Pharisee. A most devout, humble, and holy man, he confessed his own and his people's sins—praying, fasting, weeping, and, while he asks his good works to be remembered, throwing himself at God's feet to cry, Spare me according to the greatness of Thy mercy ! What a fine example of a true Christian —the humble believer yet the diligent worker !

The truth is, that to set little store on good works is an immoral and most pestilent heresy. The works by which we recommend religion and adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour, the works which spring from love to Christ and aim at the glory of God, the works by which a good man blesses society and leaves the world better than he found it, are not the "filthy rags" of Holy Scripture. No filthy rags, but the gracious and graceful ornaments of a blood-bought Church ; these, on the contrary, are the "gold of Ophir," "the raiment of needle-work" in which His bride, apparelled as a queen, stands at her Lord's right-hand—a lovely form, in a blaze of beauty and of jewels.

THE ANGELS' SONG.

THE ANGELS' SONG.

PART I.

THE birth of an heir to the throne is usually accompanied by circumstances befitting so great an event. No place is deemed worthy of it but a royal palace ; and there, at the approach of the expected hour, high nobles and the great officers of state assemble, while the whole country, big with hope, waits to welcome a successor to its long line of kings. Cannons announce the event ; seaward, landward, guns flash and roar from floating batteries and rocky battlements ; bonfires blaze on hill-tops ; steeples ring out the news in merry peals ; the nation holds holiday, giving itself up to banqueting and enjoyments, while public prayers and thanksgivings rise to Him by whom kings reign and princes decree justice. With such pomp and parade do the heirs of earthly thrones enter on the stage of life ! So came not He who is the King of kings and Lord of lords. On the eve of His birth the world went on its usual round. None were moved for His coming ; nor was there any preparation for the event—a chamber or anything else. No fruit of unhallowed love, no houseless beggar's child enters life more obscurely than

the Son of God. The very tokens by which the shepherds were taught to recognize Him were not the majesty but the extreme meanness of his condition : " This shall be a sign unto you ; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger." In fact, the Lord of heaven was to be recognized by his humiliation, as its heirs are by their humility. Yet, as we have seen a black and lowering cloud have its edges touched with living gold by the sun behind it, so all the darkest scenes of our Lord's life appear more or less irradiated with the splendors of a strange glory. Take that night on Galilee when a storm roared over land and lake, enough to wake all but the dead. The boat with Jesus and His disciples tears through the waves, now whirling on their foaming crests, now plunging into their yawning hollows ; the winds rave in His ear ; the spray falls in cold showers on His naked face ; but He sleeps. I have read of a soldier boy who was found buried in sleep beneath his gun, amid the cries and carnage of the battle ; and the powers of nature in our Lord seem to be equally exhausted. His strength is spent with toil ; and with wan face and wasted form He lies stretched out on some rude boards—the picture of one whose candle is burning away all too fast, and whom excess of zeal is hurrying into premature old age and an untimely grave. Was the sight such as to suggest the question, Where is now thy God ?—how soon it changed into a scene of magnificence and omnipotent power ! He wakes—as a mother, whom louder sounds would not stir, to her infant's feeblest wail, He wakes to the cry of His alarmed disciples ; and standing up, with the lightning

flash illumining His calm, divine face, He looks out on the terrific war of elements. He speaks ; and all is hushed. Obedient to His will, the winds fold their wings, the waves sink to rest ; and there is a great calm. "Glory to God in the highest !" How may His people catch up and continue the strain which falls from angels' lips ? In disciples plucked from the very jaws of death, and pulling their boat shoreward with strong hands and happy hearts over a moonlit glassy sea, Jesus shows us how He will make good these sayings, " Fear not, for I am with thee ; be not afraid, for I am thy God"—" I have given unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish."

The divine glory of that scene is not peculiar to it. For as an eagle, so soon as she has stooped from her realm to the ground, mounts aloft again, soaring into the blue skies of her native heavens, our Lord never descends into the abasement of His meanest circumstances without some act which bespeaks divinity, and bears Him up before our eyes into the regions of Godhead. The grave, where He weeps like a woman, gives up its prisoner at His word. Athirst by Jacob's well, like any other wayfaring, way-worn traveller, He begs a draught of water from a woman there, but tells her all she ever did. Houseless and poor, His banquet hall is the open air, His table the green grass, His feast five barley loaves and a few fishes from the neighboring lake, yet this scanty fare supplies the wants of five thousand guests. His birth and life and death, His whole history, in fact, resembles one of those treasure-chests which double locks secure ; for as that iron safe yields its hoards of

gold, silver, pearls, and precious stones to none but him who brings to each lock its own appropriate key, so the riches of divine truth, redeeming love, and saving mercy are open only to such as come to Jesus with a belief in His divinity on the one hand, and a belief in His humanity on the other ;—who behold in the child, whose birth was sung by angels, the son of Mary, and worship the only begotten, well beloved, and eternal Son of God.

Now this mingling of divine and human characters distinguished Christ's birth as much as His death. The halo of glory that surrounded His dying, crowned His infant head. His sun rose, as it afterwards set, behind a heavy bank of clouds ; but the divinity they screened, touched their edges alike with burning gold ; so that He at whose death the rocks were rent, and the sun eclipsed, and graves deserted of their dead, no more entered than He left our world as a common son of Adam. Not that a world which was to reject Him went out to meet its King with homage and royal honors. Omen of coming events, it received Him in sullen silence. But the heavens declared His glory, the skies sent out a sound ; and the tokens of His first advent—unlike the thunders which shall rend the skies when He comes the second time to judgment—were all in beautiful harmony with its object. It was love and saving mercy ; there were light, music, and angel forms. With this object all things indeed were in perfect keeping,—the serene night—the shining stars—the pearly dews glistening on the grass—snowy flocks safely pasturing—and the shepherds themselves, to whom

the annunciation was made ; men who, whether going before their charge, or carrying the lambs in their arms, or gently leading those that were with young, or standing bravely between their flocks and the roaring lion, were the choicest emblems and types of Him who, dying to save us, gave His life for the sheep. To them there suddenly appeared a multitude of the heavenly host, turning night into day, and shedding on the soft hills around a bright but gentle radiance. As guard of honor, they had swept in their downward flight by many a sun and star, escorting the Son of God to our nether world. And now—ere they left Him to tread the wine-press alone, and returned on upward wings to their native heavens, and their service before the throne of God—these celestials bent their loving eyes on the stable ; and in anticipation of Jesus' triumphs, of men saved, death conquered, graves spoiled, and Satan crushed, they sang “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.”

This hymn, sung perhaps in parts by different bands of these heavenly choristers, consists of three parts ; and we now proceed to the illustration of these.

I.

THAT REDEMPTION YIELDS THE HIGHEST GLORY
TO GOD.

I SAY the highest ; for though His *absolute* glory, like His eternal being and infinite perfections, admits of no degrees, and is affected by no circumstances whatever, it is otherwise with His *declarative* glory, as old theologians called it. This, which I speak of, and which angels sung of, consists in the manifestation of His attributes. Whatever it be, though only the drop of water, which appears a world of wonders to the eyes of a man of science, any work is glorious which reflects the divine character in any measure, and still more glorious or glorifying which exhibits it in a greater measure. God's glory expands and unfolds itself as we rise upward in the study of His works from inanimate to living objects ; from plants to animals ; from animals to man ; from man to angels ; from these to archangels, upward and still upward, to the Being who, bathed in the full blaze of divine effulgence, tops the pyramid, and stands on the highest pinnacle of Creation. That Being is God manifest in the flesh, our Lord Jesus Christ—the redemption which He wrought for us, through blood and suffering and death, being the work which reveals God most fully to our eyes, and forming a looking-glass, so to speak, to reflect the whole

measure of divinity. This will appear if we look at—

The Redeemer. One of His many titles is the *Wonderful*. Anticipating the royal birth at Bethlehem, and speaking of Christ in terms which no other key can open but the doctrine of His divinity, Isaiah says, “Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given ; and the government shall be upon his shoulder : and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.” With pencils of sunlight God paints the rose ; by arts of a divine chemistry He turns foul decay into the snow-white purity and fragrant odors of a lily ; He fashions the infant in the darkness of the mother’s womb ; He inspires dead matter with the active principle of life ; in man He unites an ethereal spirit to a lump of clay—wonders these which have perplexed the wisest men, and remain as incomprehensible to philosophers as to fools. Yet, as if there was no mystery in these but what our understanding could fathom—as if there was nothing in these to teach proud man humility and rouse his admiration—as if there was indeed no wonder but Christ himself in all this great and glorious universe, He is called by way of eminence the *Wonderful*. And why ? Because, as the stars cease to shine in presence of the sun, quenched by the effulgence, and drowned in the flood of his brighter beams, these lose all their wonders beside this little Child. To a meditative man it is curious to stand over any cradle where an infant sleeps ; and, as we look on the face so calm, and the little arms gently folded on the placid breast, to think of the mighty powers and passions

which are slumbering there ; to think that this feeble nursling has heaven or hell before it ; that an immortal in a mortal form is allied to angels ; that the life which it has begun shall last when the sun is quenched, enduring throughout all eternity. Much more wonderful the spectacle the manger offers, where shepherds bend their knees, and angels bend their eyes ! Here is present, not the immortal, but the eternal ; here is not one kind of matter united to another, or a spiritual to an earthly element, but the Creator to a creature, divine Omnipotence to human weakness, the Ancient of Days to the infant of a day. What deep secrets of divine wisdom, power, and love lie here, wrapped up in these poor swaddling-clothes ! Mary holds in her arms, in this manger with its straw, what draws the wondering eyes, and inspires the loftiest songs of angels. If that be not God's greatest, and therefore most glorifying work, where are we to seek it ? in what else is it found ? "The depth saith, It is not in me ; and the sea saith, It is not in me !" Were we to range the vast universe to find its rival, we should return, like the dove to its ark, to the stable-door, and the swaddled babe, there to mingle human voices with the heavenly choir—singing, Glory to God in the highest !

The fact that redemption yields God the highest glory will appear also if we look at—

The Redeemed.—It is in them, in sinners saved, not in the happy and holy angels, that God stands out fully revealed as in a mirror ; long and broad enough, if I may say so, to show forth all His attributes. To vary the figure ; the cross of Christ

is the focus in which all the beams of divinity, all the attributes of the Godhead, are gathered into one bright, burning spot, with power to warm the coldest and melt the stoniest heart. No man hath seen God at any time, otherwise than in His works ; and though created things are immeasurably inferior to their Creator, they may still help us to form some conception of His character. A drop of water is an ocean, a spark of fire is a sun, every grain of sand on the sea-shore is a world, in miniature ; and as those who have never seen ocean, or sun, or world, may form some idea of their appearance by magnifying these their minia-tures millions of millions of times, so, by immensely magnifying the age, the power, the wisdom, the holiness of an angel, we could form some dim conception of God. Not that we would not have still to ask, "Who can by searching find out God ? who can find out the Almighty to perfection?"—not that when we had exclaimed, in the sublime words of Job, " Hell is naked before him, and destruction hath no covering. He stretcheth out the north over the empty place, and hangeth the earth on nothing. He bindeth up the waters in his thick clouds. He holdeth back the face of His throne. The pillars of heaven tremble and are astonished at His reproof. He divideth the sea with His power. By His spirit He hath garnished the heavens ;"—we would not have to add with the patriarch, " These are parts of His ways ; but how little a portion is heard of him ? but the thunder of His power who can understand ?"

Study Him, for example, in the angels who sung this birth-song ! They are holy, and we may con-

clude that their Maker is infinitely holy ; they are wise, and He who made them must possess infinite wisdom ; they are powerful, and He must be omnipotent ; the God of good angels must be infinitely good, as the avenger of sin and evil ones must be infinitely just. This is sound reasoning—for, as David says, “He that planted the ear, shall he not hear ? He that formed the eye, shall he not see ? He that chastiseth the heathen, shall not he correct ? He that teacheth man knowledge, shall not he know ?” Still, however lofty and worthy were the conceptions which we thus formed of God, He had never been discovered in the full glory of His gracious character by this or any corresponding process. Unspeakable honor to man and unspeakable grace in God, the fulness of His character is revealed, not by seraphs but by saints—in redeemed and ransomed sinners. And so Mary Magdalene, as reflecting His attributes more fully than angels, wears in heaven a brighter glory than crowns their unfallen heads. She, and all with her, who have washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb, are trophies of free, saving mercy ; monuments of that love which, when stern justice had dragged us to the mouth of the pit, and angels, who had seen their fellows punished by one awful act of vengeance, stood in dread and silent expectation of another, graciously interposed, saying, “Deliver from going down to the pit, I have found a ransom.” Then, blessed Son of God, thou didst step forward to say, And I am that ransom ! From that day heaven was happier. It found a new joy. Angels tuned their golden harps to higher strains ; and now, these blessed spirits,

above the mean jealousies of earth's elder brothers, whenever they see Christ born anew in a soul—a sinner born again, called, converted, apparelled in Jesus' righteousness, rejoicing in His arms, or even weeping at His feet, wake up the old, grand birth-song, singing, "Glory to God in the highest!" "There is joy," said Jesus, "in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth—joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance."

PART II.

No man hath seen God at any time ; so saith the Scriptures. He who is confined to no bounds of space cannot in the nature of things have any visible form. God has however occasionally made revelations of Himself ; and such are described in language which seems opposed alike to the declarations of Scripture and the deductions of reason. It is said, for instance, of Moses and Aaron, when they ascended Mount Sinai, that "they saw the God of Israel ;" and Isaiah tells how he "saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and His train filled the temple." Believing with the Jews that if any man saw God he could not survive, but would die as by a flash of lightning, the prophet was struck with terror, and cried, in expectation of immediate death, "I am undone ; for mine eyes have seen the Lord of hosts."

The object seen in these and also other cases was no doubt the Schekinah—that holy and mysterious flame whereby God made His presence known in the days of old. We know little concerning it beyond this, that it was of the nature of light. The fairest, purest, oldest of created things, passing untainted through pollution, turning gloomy night into day, and imparting their varied beauties to earth and air and ocean, this of all material elements was the fittest symbol of

God. A circumstance this to which we probably owe the ancient practice of worshipping the Divinity by fire, and certainly such figures as these : " God is light ; " " He clothes himself with light as with a garment ; " " He dwelleth in light that is inaccessible and full of glory." This light, said to have been intensely luminous, brighter than a hundred suns, was not always nor even usually visible ; although, like a lamp placed behind a curtain, it may have usually imparted to the cloud which concealed it a tempered and dusky glow. There were occasions when the veil of this temple was rent asunder ; and then the light shone out with intense splendor—dazzling all eyes, and convincing sceptics that this cloud, now resting on the tabernacle, and now, signal for the host to march, floating upward in the morning air, was not akin to such as are born of swamps or sea ; and which, as emblems of our mortality, after changing from rosy beauty into leaden dullness, melt into air, leaving the place that once knew them to know them no more for ever. This symbol and token of the Divine presence was of all the types and figures of Jesus Christ in some respects both the most apposite and glorious : a cloud with God within, and speaking from it—going before to guide the host—placing Himself for their protection between them and their enemies—by day their grateful shade from scorching heat, by night their sun amid surrounding darkness.

It was one, and not the least singular of its aspects, that this cloud always grew light when the world grew dark—the cloudy pillar of the day blazing forth at night as a pillar of fire. So shone

the divinity in Him who was "Emmanuel, God with us." His darkest circumstances, His deepest humiliations, being the occasions of His greatest glory. He was buried, and being so, was greatly humbled ; but angels attended His funeral, and guarded His tomb. He was crucified, condemned to the death of the vilest criminal, and being so, was greatly humbled ; but those heavens and earth which are as little moved by the death of the greatest monarch as by the fall of a withered leaf, expressed their sympathy with the august Sufferer—the sun hid his face, and went into mourning, the earth trembled with horror at the deed. He was born, and in like manner He was greatly humbled, and had been, though His birth had happened in a palace and His mother had been a queen ; but with a poor woman for His mother, a stable for His birth-place, a manger for His cradle, and straw for His bed, these meanesses, like its spots on the face of the sun, were lost in a blaze of glory. Earth did not celebrate His advent, but Heaven did. Illumining her skies, she sent herald angels to proclaim the news, and lighted up a new star to guide the feet which sought the place where man's best hopes were cradled. The most joyful birth that ever happened, it was meet that it should be sung by angel lips,—and all the more because, redemption glorifies God in the sight of holy angels.

II.

REDEMPTION GLORIFIES GOD IN THE SIGHT OF
HOLY ANGELS.

THEY take a lively interest in the affairs of our world, as the Scriptures show, and as Jacob saw in his vision ; for what else means that ladder where they appeared to his dreaming eye ascending and descending between earth and heaven ? To the care of John our dying Lord committed His mother ; but God, when He sent His Son into the world, committed Him to their care,—“ He hath given his angels charge over thee, that thou dash not thy foot against a stone.” The care which their Head enjoyed is extended to all the members. How happy are the people that are in such a case ! Think of the poor saint who has none to wait on him, or the pious domestic who serves a table, and humbly waits on others, having angels to wait on her ! Are they not said in Scripture to be “ ministering spirits sent forth to minister to them who are heirs of salvation ?”—however the world may despise them, “ this honor have all his saints.” However lowly their earthly state, the saints are a kingly race ; and as our highest nobles deem it an honor to wait on the princes of the blood, accepting and soliciting offices at court, the angels are happy to serve

such as, through their union with His incarnate Son, stand nearer the throne of God than themselves. Unseen by him, these celestials guard the good man's bed ; watch his progress ; wait on his person ; guide his steps ; and ward off many a blow the devil aims at his head and heart. They are the nurses of Christ's babes ; the tutors and teachers of His children. A belief in guardian saints is a silly Popish superstition ; but we have good authority in Scripture for believing that in this our state of pupilage and probation, along all the way to Zion, in the conflicts with temptation, and amid the thick of battle, God commits His saints to angels' care ; and that, as it is in their loving arms, that the soul of an aged saint is borne away to glory, every child of God has its own celestial guardian, and sleeps in its little cradle beneath the feathers of an angel's wing. What said our Lord ? On setting a child before the people as a pattern for them to copy, "Take heed," He said, "that ye despise not one of these little ones ; for I say unto you, That in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven."

But whether we are, or are not, the happier for angels, there is no question that they are the happier for us. They always loved God ; but since man's redemption they love Him more, and employ higher strains and loftier raptures to praise His wisdom, power, holiness, justice, and love. It has disclosed to them new views of God, and opened up in heaven new springs of pleasure. Heaven has grown more heavenly, and though they might have deemed it impossible to add one

drop to their happiness, they are holier and happier angels. There is joy among the angels of heaven over every sinner that repenteth ; and to the joyful cry, My son that was dead is alive again, they respond, as they receive the returned penitent from the Father's arms into their own, My brother that was dead is alive again, that was lost is found ! Never, from surf-beaten shore or rocky headland, do spectators watch with such anxious interest the life-boat, as, now seen and now lost, now breasting the waves and now hurled back on the foaming crest of a giant billow, she makes for the wreck, as they watch those who, with the Bible in their hearts and hands, go forth to save the lost. And when the poor perishing sinner throws himself into Jesus' arms, what gratulations among these happy spirits ! "There is joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons." The event is one which I can fancy was in the prophet's eye, when, fired with rapture, he cried, "Sing, O ye heavens ; for the Lord hath done it : shout, ye lower parts of the earth ; break forth into singing, ye mountains, O forest, and every tree therein : for the Lord hath redeemed Jacob, and glorified himself in Israel !" And the heavens do sing. While the saints, descending from their thrones, cast their sparkling crowns at Jesus' feet, and ten times ten thousand harps sound, and ten times ten thousand angels sing, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing."

III.

REDEMPTION GLORIFIES GOD THROUGHOUT ALL
THE UNIVERSE.

WITH a small band of fishermen at His side, and no place on earth where to lay His head, Jesus pointed to the sun, riding high in heaven or rising over the hill-tops to bathe the scene in golden splendor, and said, "I am the light of the world." A bold saying ; yet the day is coming, however distant it appears, when the tidings of salvation carried to the ends of the earth, and Jesus worshipped of all nations, shall justify the speech ; and the wishes shall be gratified, and the prayers answered, and the prophecies fulfilled, so beautifully expressed in these lines of Heber :

" Waft, waft, ye winds, His story,
And you, ye waters, roll:
Till, like a sea of glory,
It spreads from pole to pole."

But shall our world be the limits of the wondrous tale ? Though ever and deeply interesting as the scene of redemption, just as to patriots is the barest moor where a people fought and conquered for their freedom, our earth holds in other respects but a very insignificant place in creation. In a space of the sky no larger than a tenth part of the moon's disc, the telescope discovers many thou-

sands of stars, each a sun, attended probably by a group of planets like our own : their number indeed is such that many parts of the heavens appear as if they were sprinkled with gold-dust ; and probably there are as many suns and worlds in the universe as there are leaves in a forest, or rather, sands on the ocean shore.

Boldly venturing out into the regions of speculation, some have thought that, if sin defile any of these worlds, its inhabitants may share in the benefits of the atonement which Christ offered in ours ; and that beings further removed than we from the scenes of Calvary, and differing more from us than we from the Jews of whom the Messiah came, may, as well as we, find a Saviour by faith in Jesus ; and that for this end the work of redemption has perhaps been revealed to such as, removed from our earth many millions of miles, never even saw the planet that was its theatre and scene. There may be nothing in this. I dare not say it is impossible ; but these speculations touch the deep things of God, and we would not attempt to be wise above that which is written. Still, Scripture affords ground for believing, for hoping, at least, that the story of redemption has been told in other worlds than ours, and that the love of God in Christ—that fairest, fullest manifestation of our Father's heart—links all parts of creation together, and links all more closely to the throne of God. "He that hath seen me, Philip," said our Lord to that disciple, "hath seen the Father also ;" and as I believe that He who delights to bless all His unfallen creatures would not withhold from the inhabitants of other spheres

the happiness of knowing Him in His most adorable, gracious, and glorious character, I can fancy them eagerly searching their skies for a sight of our world,—the scene of that story which has conveyed to them the fullest knowledge of Him they love, their deepest sense of His ineffable holiness and unspeakable mercy. Not from pole to pole, but from planet to planet, and from star to star, the love of Christ deserves to be proclaimed ; and it is a thought as grand as it is probable, that the story of Calvary, not yet translated into all the tongues of earth, is told in the ten times ten thousand tongues of other worlds, and that the Name which is above every name—the blessed Name which dwells in life in a believer's heart and trembles in death on his lips—is known in spheres which his foot never trod and his eye never saw. Such honors crown the head man once crowned with thorns ; and therefore did David, with the eye of a seer and the fire of a poet, while calling for praise from kings of the earth and all people, princes and all judges, young men and children, rise to a loftier flight, exclaiming : "Praise Him in the heights. Praise ye Him, all ye angels : praise ye Him, all His hosts. Praise ye Him, sun and moon : praise Him, all ye stars of light."

IV.

THE REDEEMER AND REDEMPTION ARE WORTHY
OF OUR HIGHEST PRAISE.

LET us bend the head, and, in company of the shepherds, enter the stable. Heard above the champing of bits, the stroke of hoofs, the rattling of chains, and the lowing of oxen, the feeble wail of an infant turns our steps to a particular stall : here a woman lies stretched on a bed of straw, and her new-born child, hastily wrapped in some part of her dress, finds a cradle in the manger. A pitiful sight !—such a fortune as occasionally befalls the Arabs of society—such an incident as may occur in the history of one of those vagrant, vagabond, outcast families who, their country's shame, tent in woods and sleep under hedges, when no barn or stable offers a covering to their houseless heads. Yet princes on their way to the crown, brides on their way to the marriage, bannered armies on their way to the battle, and highest angels in their flight from star to star, might stop to say of this sight, as Moses of the burning bush, “Let me turn aside, and see this great sight !”

The prophet foretells a time when the wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid ; and, bound in the same stall, and fed at the same manger, the lion shall

eat straw with the ox. Here is a greater wonder ! This stable is the house of God, the very gate of heaven : under this dusty roof, inside those narrow walls, He lodges whom the heaven of heavens cannot contain : the tenant of this manger is the Son, who, leaving the bosom of His Father to save us, here pillows His head on straw ; of this feeble babe the hands are to hurl Satan from his throne, and wrench asunder the strong bars of death ; this one tender life, this single corn-seed is to become the prolific parent of a thousand harvests, and fill the garners of glory with the fruits of salvation. Mean as it looks, yet more splendid than marble palaces,—more sacred than the most venerable and hallowed temples, here the Son of God was born, and with Him were born Faith, Hope and Charity—our Peace, our Liberty, and our Eternal Life. Had He not been born, we had never been born again ; had He not lain in a manger, we had never lain in Abraham's bosom ; had He not been wrapped in swaddling-clothes, we had been wrapped in ever lasting flames ; had His head in infancy not been pillow'd on straw, and in death on thorns, ours had never been crowned in glory. But that He was born, better we had never been ; life had been a misfortune to which time had brought no change, and death no relief, and the grave no rest. "Glory to God in the highest," that He was born : we had otherwise been lifting up our eyes in torment with this unavailing, endless cry, "O that my mother had been my grave ! Cursed be the day wherein I was born !"

If language cannot express the love and gratitude we owe to the Saviour, let our lives do so.

Shallow streams run brawling over their pebbly beds, but the broad, deep river pursues its course in silence to the sea ; and so is it with our strongest, deepest feelings. Great joy like great sorrow, great gladness like great grief, great admiration like great detestation, take breath and speech away. On first seeing Mont Blanc as the sun rose to light up his summit and irradiate another and another snow-clad pinnacle, I remember the silent group who had left their couches to witness and watch the glorious scene : before its majesty and magnificence all were for awhile dumb, opening not the mouth. I have read, when travellers reached the crest of the hill, and first looked down on Jerusalem,—the scene of our Saviour's sorrow, the garden that heard His groans, the city that led Him out to die, the soil that was bedewed with His tears and crimsoned with His blood,—how their hearts were too full for utterance. If a sight of the city where He died so affects Christians, as the scenes of His last hours rush on their memory and rise vividly to their imagination, how will they look on that scene where, surrounded by ten times ten thousand saints and thousands of angels, He reigns in glory ! I can fancy the saint who has shut his eyes on earth to open them in heaven, standing speechless ; and as the flood of music fills his ear, and the blaze of glory his eye, and the thought of what he owes to Jesus his heart,—I can fancy him laying the crown, which he has received from his Saviour's hands, in silent gratitude at His feet ; and as he recovers speech, and sees hell and its torments beneath him, earth and its sorrows behind him, an eternity of unchequered, unchang-

ing bliss, before him,—I can fancy the first words that break from his grateful lips will be, “Glory to God, glory to God in the highest!” Never till then, nowhere but there, will our praise be worthy of Jesus and His redemption. Meanwhile, let Him who demonstrates God’s highest glory and fills heaven’s highest throne, hold the highest place in our hearts. Let us surround His name with the highest honors; and, laying our time and talents, our faculties and our affections, our wealth, and fame, and fortunes at His feet, crown Him Lord of all.

PART III.

SOME years ago the question which agitated the heart of Europe was, Peace or War ? The interests of commerce, the lives of thousands, the fate of kingdoms, trembled in the balance. Navies rode at anchor, and opposing armies, like two black thunder-clouds, waited for statesmen to issue from the council-chamber, bearing the sword or the olive-branch. Esteeming the arbitrament of battle one which necessity only could justify, Britain longed for peace ; but, with ships ready to slip their cables, and soldiers standing by their guns, she was grimly prepared for war. Had ambassadors from the nation with which we were ready to join issue approached our shores at this crisis, what eager crowds would have attended their advent, and how impatiently would they have waited the course of events ! And had peace been the result of the conference, how would the tidings, as they passed from mouth to mouth, and were flashed by the telegraph from town to town, have filled and moved the land ! The pale student would have forgot his books, the anxious merchant his speculations, the trader his shop, the tradesman his craft, tired labor her toils, happy children their toys, and even the bereaved their griefs ; and like the whirlpool, which sucks straws and sea-weed, boats and gallant ships —all things, big or small—into its mighty vortex,

the news would have absorbed all other subjects. The one topic of conversation at churches and theatres, at marriages and funerals, in halls and cottages, in crowded cities and in lonely glens; ministers had carried it in their sermons to the pulpit, and devout Christians in their thanksgivings to the Throne of Grace.

In a much greater crisis, where the stakes were deeper, the question being not one of peace or war between man and man, but between man and God, an embassy from heaven reached the borders of our world. Unlike Elijah, rough in dress, of aspect stern and speech severe, whose appearance struck Ahab with terror, and wrung from the pale lips of the conscience-stricken king the cry, "Hast thou found me, O mine enemy?"—unlike Jonah as he walked the wondering streets, and woke their echoes with his doleful cry, "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be destroyed,"—the ambassadors were "a multitude of shining angels." Leaving the gates of heaven, they winged their flight down the starry sky to descend and hover above the fields of Bethlehem, and in the form of a song, as became such joyful tidings, to proclaim news of Peace—their song, "Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, good will toward men." Nothing presents a more remarkable example of "much in little" than these few but weighty words. In small crystals, that coat, as with shining frost-work, the sides of a vessel, we have all the salts which give perpetual freshness to the ocean, their life to the weeds that clothe its rocks, and to the fish that swim its depths and shallows. In some drops of oil distilled from rose-leaves of Indian lands, and valued at many

times their weight in gold, we have enclosed within one small phial the perfume of a whole field of roses—that which, diffused through ten thousand leaves, gave every flower its fragrance. Essences, as they are called, present, in a concentrated form, the peculiar properties of leaves or flowers or fruits, of the animal, vegetable, or earthy bodies from which they are extracted; and, like these, this hymn presents the whole gospel in a single sentence. Here is the Bible, the scheme of redeeming love, that grand work which saved a lost world, gladdened angels in heaven, confounded devils in hell, and engaged the highest attributes of the Godhead, summed up in one short, glorious, glowing paragraph. For what so much as the gospel, what, indeed, but the gospel, yields Jehovah the highest glory, blesses our earth with peace, and expresses Heaven's good-will to the sons of men? Such were the ambassadors, and such the embassage!

When the king of Babylon, hearing how the shadow had travelled back ten degrees on the dial of Ahaz, sent ambassadors to Hezekiah to inquire about this strange phenomenon, Hezekiah received them with the greatest respect; paid them honors, indeed, which cost both him and his country dear. The news of an embassy having come to Joshua spread like wildfire among the Israelites, moving the whole camp. Seized with eager curiosity, all ran to hear what the strangers had to say, and gaze with wonder on their soiled and ragged dress, their clouted shoes and mouldy bread. The herald angels, though arrayed in heavenly splendors; and bringing glad tidings of peace, were received with no such honors, excited no such interest. Strange

and sad omen of the indifference with which many would hear the gospel! While angels sung, the world slept; and none but some wakeful watchers heard their voices or beheld this splendid vision. They were humble shepherds, to whom the ambassadors of heaven delivered their message; and it may be well to pause and look at those who were privileged and honored to hear it. We do not pretend to know certainly the reasons why God, who giveth no account of His ways, conferred an honor so distinguished on them rather than on others. But we may guess; and in any case may find the employment profitable and instructive, if we are wise enough to find "sermons in stones, books in the running brooks, and good in everything."

V.

THEY WERE MEN OF A PEACEFUL CALLING.

THE highest view of the profession of arms is, that the soldier, deterring evil-doers and maintaining order at home, on the one hand, and prepared, on the other, to resist hostile invasion, is in reality, notwithstanding his deadly weapons and warlike garb, an officer or instrument of peace. A day is coming—alas ! with the roar of cannon booming across the ocean, how far distant it seems !—when Christianity shall exert a paramount influence throughout all the world : then, tyrants having ceased to reign, and slaves to groan, and nations to suffer from the lust of gold or power, this beautiful picture of the prophet shall become a reality : “The whole earth,” said the seer, “is at rest, and is quiet ; they break forth into singing.” Till then, paradoxical though it appears, the cause of peace may be pled with most effect by the mouths of cannon. Fitness for war is often the strongest security for peace ; and a nation whose wishes and interests both run in the direction of peace, may find no way of warning restless and unprincipled and ambitious neighbors that it is not to be touched with impunity, but by showing itself, thistle-like, all bristling over with bayonets. “Necessity,” said Paul, “is laid on me to preach.” It may be

laid on a people to fight. Nor, when the sword has been drawn in a good cause, has God refused His sanction to that last, terrible resort. It was He who imparted strength to the arm before whose resistless sweep the Philistines fell in swathes, like grass to the mower's scythe. It was He who guided the stone that, shot from David's sling, buried itself in the giant's brow. It was He who gave its earthquake-power to the blast of the horns which levelled the walls of Jericho with the ground. And when night came down to cover the retreat of the Amorites and their allies, it was He who interposed to secure the bloody fruits of victory—saying, as eloquently put by a rustic preacher, “‘Fight on, my servant Joshua, and I will hold the lights ;’ and ‘the sun stood still on Gibeon, and the moon in the valley of Ajalon.’” Admitting war to be an awful scourge, these cases show that the duties of a soldier are not inconsistent with the calling of a Christian.

Yet it was over no battle-field, the most sacred to truth and liberty, these angels hovered ; no blazing homesteads nor burning cities shed their lurid gleam on the skies they made radiant with light ; nor was it where their sweet voices strangely mingled with the clash of arms and the shouts of charging squadrons that they sang of glory, goodwill, and peace. This had been out of keeping with the congruity which characterizes all God's works of nature, and which will be found equally characteristic of His works of providence and grace. As was meet, the glad tidings of peace were announced to men who were engaged in an eminently peaceful occupation ; who passed tran-

quil lives amid the quietness of the solemn hills, far removed alike from the ambitious strife of cities and the bloody spectacles of war. Lying amid the solitudes of the mountains, where no sounds fall on the ear but the bleating of flocks, the lowing of cattle, the hum of bees, the baying of a watch-dog from the lonely homestead, the murmur of hidden rills, the everlasting rush of the waterfall as it plunges flashing into its dark, foaming pool, pastoral are eminently peaceful scenes. Indeed, the best emblem of peace which a great painter has been able to present he owes to them—it is a picture of a quiet glen, with a lamb licking the rusty lips of a dismounted gun, while the flocks around crop the grass that waves above the slain.

Apt scholars of the devil, wicked men have used Holy Scripture to justify the most impious crimes. Others, with more fancy than judgment, have drawn the most absurd conclusions from its facts ; but we seem warranted to conclude, that by selecting shepherds to receive the first tidings of Jesus' birth, apart from the circumstance that they were Christ's own favorite types of Himself, God intended to confer special honor on the cause, and encourage the lovers and advocates of peace. Deer are furnished by nature with horns, dogs with teeth, eagles with talons, serpents with poison, and bees with stings ; but men have no weapons of offence. Yet, acting under the dominion of their lusts, men have a passion for fighting, and, easily fired with the spirit, and dazzled with the glory of war, are ready to abandon argument for blows ; and I cannot but think that He who would not permit David, the man after

His own heart, to build Him a house because he had been a man of blood, conferred this honor on these humble shepherds because they were men of peace. Whether it be with Himself or our own consciences, in the midst of our families, among our neighbors, or between nation and nation, He enjoins us to cultivate peace ; in His own emphatic words, we are to "seek peace and pursue it."

VI.

THEY WERE MEN OF HUMBLE RANK.

MANY in humble, as well as in more coveted circumstances, are discontented with their position. They repine at their lot, and murmur against the Providence which has assigned it. This is not only wicked but absurd, since true happiness lies much less in changing our condition than in making the best of it, whatever it be. Besides, God says, "I will make a man more precious than fine gold ; even a man than the golden wedge of Ophir ;" and the estimate which he forms of us turns in no respect whatever on the place we fill. One artist paints a grand, another a common, or even a mean, subject ; but we settle their comparative merits, praising this one and condemning that, not by the subjects they paint, but by the way they paint them. To borrow an illustration from the stage, (as Paul did from heathen games), one player, tricked out in regal state, with robes, and crown, and sceptre, performs the part of a king, and another that only of a common soldier or country boor ; yet the applause of the audience is not given to the parts the actors play, but to the way they play them. Even so, it is not the place that man fills, whether high or humble, but the way he fills it to which God has, and we should have, most regard.

Not that we would reduce the inequalities of society any more than those of the earth, with its varied features of swelling hill and lovely dale, to one dull, long, common level. Death, the great grim leveller, does that office both for cottagers and kings. Let it be left to the sexton's spade. The mountains which give shelter to the valleys, and gather the rains that fill their rivers and fertilize their pastures, have important uses in nature, and so have the corresponding heights of rank and wealth and power in society. Setting our affections on things above, let us be content to wait for the honors and rest of heaven ; let us seek to be good rather than great ; to be rich in faith rather than in wealth ; to stand high in God's esteem rather than in man's ; saying, with Paul, "I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content;"—or singing with the boy in the "Pilgrim's Progress," who, meanly clad, but with "a fresh and well-favored countenance," fed his father's sheep :

"He that is down needs fear no fall ;
He that is low, no pride ;
He that is humble ever shall
Have God to be his guide.

"I am content with what I have,
Little be it or much ;
And, Lord, contentment still I crave,
Because thou savest such."

"Do you hear him ?" said the guide. "I will dare to say that this boy lives a merrier life, and wears more of that herb called heart's-ease in his bosom, than he that is clad in silk and velvet."

Why should a man blush for his humble origin ? The Saviour's mother was a poor woman ; and no head ever lay in a meaner cradle than the manger where Mary laid her first-born—the Son of the Most High God. Why should any be ashamed of honest poverty ? Men of immortal names, the apostles, were called from the lowest ranks, and went forth to conquer and convert the world without a penny in their purse. Was not our Lord Himself poor ? He earned His bread, and ate it, with the sweat of His brow, while others lay luxuriously on down ; He had often no other roof than the open sky, or warmer bed than the dewy ground ; and never had else to entertain His guests than the coarsest and most common fare—barley-loaves and a few small fishes. Though rich in the wealth of Godhead, with the resources of heaven and of earth at His sovereign command, poverty attended His steps like His shadow, along the way from a humble cradle to a bloody grave. He made Himself poor that He might make us rich ; and it seemed meet that to poor rather than to rich men God should reveal the advent of Him who came to enrich the poor, whether kings or beggars, peers or peasants. As if to censure the respect paid to rank apart from merit, or to wealth apart from worth, He who has no respect for persons honored in these shepherds honest poverty and humble virtue. They received ambassadors not accredited to sovereigns ; as cottages, not palaces, housed Him whom the heavens have received, and the heaven of heavens cannot contain.

VII.

THEY WERE MEN ENGAGED IN COMMON DUTIES.

MOTHERS cumbered with a load of domestic cares, merchants worried with business, statesmen charged with their country's affairs, and thousands who have a daily fight to keep the wolf from the door, fancy that, if they enjoyed the leisure some have, and could bestow more time on divine things, they would be more religious than they are, and rising to higher, calmer elevations of thought and temper, would maintain a nearer communion with God. It may reconcile such to their duties to observe how the men were employed on whom God bestowed this unexpected and exalted honor. They were engaged in the ordinary business of their earthly calling ; of a hard and humble one. Types of Him to whose care His people owe their safety amid the temptations, and their support amid the trials of life, these shepherds were watching their flocks ; peering through the gloom of night ; listening for the stealthy step of the robber ; ready, starting to their feet, to beat off the sneaking wolf, or bravely battle with the roaring lion.

He whose sun shines as brightly on the lowliest as on the stateliest flower, regards with complacency the humblest man who wins his daily bread, and discharges the duties of his station, whatever

they be, in such a way as to glorify God and be of advantage to his fellow-creatures. Heaven, as this case brilliantly illustrates, is never nearer men, nor are they ever nearer it, than in those fields or workshops, where, with honest purpose and a good conscience, they are diligently pursuing their ordinary avocations. No doubt—for God does not cast His pearls before swine—these shepherds were pious men. One passing a night in their humble dwellings would have seen the father with reverent mien gather his household to prayer; and one passing these uplands, where they held their watch, might have heard their voices swaying on the midnight air, as they sang together the psalms of David amid the very scenes where he tuned his harp and fed his father's flocks. But people are too apt to suppose that religion lies mainly, if not exclusively, in prayers, reading the Bible, listening to sermons, and attending on sacraments; in time spent, or work done, or offerings made, or sacrifices endured, for what are called, in common language, religious objects. These are the means, not the end. He who rises from his knees to his daily task, and with an eye not so much to please men as God, does it well, carries divine worship to the workshop, and throws a sacred halo around the ordinary secularities of life. That, indeed, may be the highest expression of religion; just as it is the highest expression of devoted loyalty to leave the precincts of the court and the presence of the sovereign, to endure the hardships of a campaign, and stand in soiled and tattered regimentals by the king's colors amid the deadly hail of battle. He who goes to common duties in a devout and

Christian spirit proves his loyalty to God ; and, as this case proves, is of all men the most likely to be favored with tokens of the Divine presence—communications of grace which will sustain his patience under a life of toil, and fit him for the rest that remaineth for the people of God.

PART IV.

MINGLED with its rattling shingle, the sea-beach bears hazel-nuts and fir-tops—things which once belonged to the blue hills that rise far inland on the horizon. Dropped into the brooks of bosky glens, they have been swept into the river, to arrive, after many windings and long wanderings, at the ocean; to be afterwards washed ashore with shells and wreck and sea-weed. The Gulf Stream, whose waters by a beautiful arrangement of Providence bring the heat of southern latitudes to temper the wintry rigor of the north, throws objects on the western coasts of Europe which have performed longer voyages—fruits and forest-trees that have travelled the breadth of the Atlantic, casting the productions of the New World on the shores of the Old.

Like these, the record of events which happened in the earliest ages of the world has been carried along the course of time, and spread by the diverging streams of population over the whole surface of the globe. The facts are, as was to be expected, always more or less changed, and often, indeed, fragmentary. Still, like old coins, which retain traces of their original effigies and inscriptions, these traditions possess a high historic value. Their remarkable correspondence with the statements of the Bible confirms our faith in its

divinity ; and their being common to nations of habits the most diverse, and of habitations separated from each other by the whole breadth of the earth, proves the unity of our race. If they cannot be regarded as pillars, they are buttresses of the truth ; being inexplicable on any theory but that which infidelity has so often, but always vainly, assailed, namely, that all Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and that He has made of one blood all the nations of the earth.

To take some examples. Look, for instance, at a custom common among the Red Indians, ages before white men had crossed the sea and carried the Bible to their shores ! At the birth of a child, as Humboldt relates, a fire was kindled on the floor of the hut, and a vessel of water placed beside it ; but not with the murderous intent of those savage tribes who practise infanticide, and, pressed by hunger, destroy their children to save their food. The infant here was first plunged into the water—buried, as we should say, in baptism ; and afterwards swept rapidly and unharmed through the flaming fire. A very remarkable rite ; and one that, as we read the story, recalled to mind this double baptism, "He shall baptize you," said Jesus, "with the Holy Ghost and with fire ;" "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot see the kingdom of God." Its administration to infants, to such as had committed no sin, nor knew, indeed, their right hand from their left, implied a belief in the presence, not of acquired, but of original impurity. It is based on that ; and without it this rite is not only mysterious, but meaningless. Blind is the eye which does not see

in this old pagan ceremony a tradition of the primeval Fall, and dull the ear which does not hear in its voice no faint echo of these words, "I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me. . . . Create in me a clean heart, O God ; and renew a right spirit within me."

Like the Fall, the Flood also was an event which, though it may have worn no channel in the rocks, has left indelible traces of its presence on the memory of mankind. The Greeks had strange traditions of this awful judgment ; so had the Romans ; and so had almost all the heathen nations of antiquity—strange legends, to which the Bible supplies the only key. Its account of the Deluge explains the traditions, and the traditions corroborate it ; and by their general mutual correspondence we are confirmed in our belief that its authors were holy men of old, who spoke as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. To evade this argument, infidels may trace these legends to Jews, who, led captive of the heathen, related to them the Mosaic story, and took advantage of man's love of the marvellous to practise on his credulity. The attempt is vain ; since, on turning from the Old World to the New, we find the very same traditions there ; and there, long ages before Jew or Christian knew of its existence, or had landed on its shores. Those paintings which were to Mexicans and Peruvians substitutes for history, for a written or printed language, embody the story of the Flood. One of these pictures, for example, shows us a man afloat with his family in a rude boat on a shoreless sea ; in another, the raven of Bible story is cleaving on black wing the

murky sky ; in a third, the heads of the hills appear in the background like islands emerging from the waste of waters, while, with such confusion as is inseparable from traditionary lore, the raven is substituted for the dove, and appears making its way to the lone tenants of the boat with evidence of the subsidence of the waters—a fir-cone in its bloody beak. Rolled down the long stream of ages, the true history is more or less changed, and even fragmentary, like a water-worn stone. Still, between these traditionary records and Bible story there is a remarkable agreement. They sound like its echo. In them pagan voices proclaim the holiness of God. Lest we also should perish with those who, looking on the placid sea and starry sky of the Old World's last night, asked, “ Where is the promise of His coming ?” they warn us to flee from wrath to come.

Of all these venerable legends painted in colors or embalmed in verse, written in story or sculptured on stone, none are more remarkable than those where the serpent appears. Old divines imagined that the creature whose shape Satan borrowed for the temptation had originally no malignant aspect; neither the poisoned fangs, nor eyes of fire, nor cold, scaly, wriggling form which man and beast recoil from with instinctive horror. They fancied that the curse, “ Upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat,” was followed by a sudden metamorphosis, and that till then the appearance of the serpent was as lovely as it is now loathsome. They gave the words of the curse a literal interpretation. They bear a deeper meaning, no doubt; yet the fancy of these old

divines may have approached nearer to fact than many perhaps suppose. Science reads the history of remote ages as she finds it inscribed on the rocks ; and, on turning over these stony leaves, we find that the earliest form of the serpent was different from that which, as it crawls and wriggles along the ground, so forcibly recalls the very words of the curse. Though they have now only such powers of motion as belong to the meanest worm, those skeletons which the rocks entomb show that the serpent tribe had once feet to walk with, and even wings to spurn the ground and cleave the air. Such is the testimony of the rocks ! And, taking the words of Scripture in their literal sense, there is, to say the least of it, a very curious coincidence between the voices of the rocks and the voice of revelation. But, be that as it may, what else but fragmentary traditions of Eden and the Fall are the forms of serpent worship among the heathen, who acted, as they still often act, on the principle of propitiating the powers of evil, the many old monuments on which its figure is sculptured, and the many old legends in which it plays a conspicuous part ? What else was the belief of our pagan fathers, that within a dark cave in the bowels of the earth there sat a great scaly dragon, brooding on gold ? What else was the fabled garden of the Hesperides, where the trees, guarded by a fierce and formidable serpent, bore apples of gold ? What else was the tragic story of a father and his sons dying by the bites and crushed within the scaly folds of a coil of serpents ; and on which, as touchingly represented in the sculptured marble, we have never looked without recalling the fate of

Adam and his unhappy offspring? And what else is the old legend of him who with rash hand sowed serpent's teeth, and saw spring from the soil, not clustering vines, or feathery palms, or stalks of waving corn, but a crop of swords, and spears, and armed men? Read that fable by the light of the Bible, and the wild legend stands out the record of an awful fact. To the serpent the world owes its wars, and discords, and the sin which is their source. Disguised in its form, Satan brought in sin; and when sin entered on the scene, peace departed—peace between God and man, peace between man and man, peace between man and himself—the peace which, with all its blessings, He descended from heaven to restore who is our Peace, and whom angels ushered on the scene of His toils and triumphs, of His atoning death and glorious victory, with songs of "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men."

VIII.

JESUS RESTORES PEACE BETWEEN GOD AND MAN.

THERE are things which God cannot do—which it were not to honor but dishonor Him to believe He could. He can neither tempt, nor be tempted, to sin. The sinner He may love, but not his sin ; that is impossible ; as the prophet expresses it, "Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity." Indeed, I would as soon believe that God could condemn a holy spirit to the pains of hell, as admit a guilty one, unjustified and unsanctified, to the joys of heaven. In that terrible indictment which God thunders out against Israel by the mouth of Ezekiel, He says, "Thou art the land which is not cleansed. Her princes in the midst thereof are like wolves ravening the prey, to shed blood, and to destroy souls, to get dishonest gain. Her prophets have daubed them with untempered mortar, saying, Thus saith the Lord God, when the Lord hath not spoken. The people of the land have used oppression, and exercised robbery, and have vexed the poor and needy ; therefore have I poured out mine indignation upon them ; I have consumed them with the fire of my wrath : their own way have I recompensed upon their heads, saith the Lord." So he arraigns this and the other class.

And how of the priests? "Her priests have violated my law, and have profaned mine holy things: they have put no difference between the holy and profane, neither have they showed difference between the unclean and the clean." He censures His servants for not separating between the clean and the unclean; and it insults Him to suppose that He could do in His own practice what He condemns in theirs. Events, such as old murders brought to light, ever and anon occur to show that God's mill, as runs the proverb, though it grinds slow, grinds sure; yet because He does not execute judgment speedily on workers of iniquity — giving them space to repent; because He often seems, like one far remote from earth, to treat its crimes and virtues with equal indifference, men have not believed these solemn words, "There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked." But let the wicked hear His words, and take the warning, "Thou hatest instruction; thou castest My words behind thee. When thou sawest a thief, then thou consentedst with him. Thou hast been partaker with adulterers. Thou givest thy mouth to evil, and thy tongue practiseth deceit. Thou sittest and speakest against thy brother; thou slanderest thine own mother's son. These things hast thou done, and I kept silence; thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself: but I will reprove thee, and set them in order before thine eyes. Consider this, ye that forget God, lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver."

The universal conscience of mankind is stricken with a sense of guilt. Alarmed by an instinctive

sense of danger, men have felt the need of reconciliation ; and, under a sense of His displeasure, have everywhere, and in all ages, sought to make their peace with God. For this end altars were raised and temples built ; sacrifices offered, and penances endured. If the colossal structures of Egypt, and the lovely temples of Greece and Rome, were erected, as well to adorn the state as to please the gods, it was less to please approving, than to appease angry divinities, that their courts resounded with the cries of victims, and smoking altars ran red with blood. So much did the heathen feel their need of peace, such store did they set by it, that many of them sought it at any price. They would buy peace at any cost ; nor did they shrink from giving all their fortune, even the fruit of their body, for the sin of their souls. For peace with God the Hindoo walked to his distant temples in sandals that, set with spikes, pierced his flesh at every step, and marked all the long, slow, painful journey with a track of blood ; for peace with God the Syrian led his sweet boy up to the fires of Moloch, and, unmoved in purpose by cries, or curses, or passionate entreaties, cast him shrieking on the burning pile ; for peace with God the Indian mother approached the river's brink with streaming tears and trembling steps, and, tearing the suckling from her bursting heart, kissed it, to turn away her eyes, and fling it into the flood. We pity their ignorance. But how do they rebuke the indifference of many ; their unwillingness to submit to any sacrifice whatever for the honor of Jesus and the interests of their souls ? These heathens may pity thousands whom they

shall rise up in judgment to condemn. Neglecting the great salvation, preferring the pleasures of sin, what a contrast do these offer to a poor Hindoo, who, hearing a missionary tell of the blood of Christ, sprang from the ground, and, loosing his bloody sandals, flung them away to exclaim, "Now, now I have found what I want!"

The peace which he found all men want, and shall find in Jesus, if they seek it honestly, earnestly. God has no pleasure in the death of the wicked. He never had. We pronounce him an unnatural father, who, on a breach occurring between him and his child, though he is the injured and not the injurer, does not long to be reconciled—is not the first to make advances and overtures of peace. In this feature of the parental character God has stamped upon our hearts the beautiful image of His own. Yearning over them as the kind old man over his wayward prodigal, his exiled child, God was willing to receive back sinners to His arms; to reinstate them in His family, and restore them to His favor. But how was this to be done?—done without dishonor to His holy law, and with due regard to His character as a God of truth. He had said, "The soul that sinneth shall die;" nor could peace be restored between Him and man but on such terms as maintained His truth. A father or mother punishes one child, and allows another, guilty of the same offence, to go free. But had God cast fallen angels into hell, and, without any regard to His word, admitted fallen men to heaven, what had angels, what had devils, what had men themselves thought of a God who conducted His government with such

caprice—playing fast and loose with His most solemn words “The way of the Lord,” said ancient Israel, “is not equal;” and in such a case there had been ground for the charge, and none for the indignation with which He repels it, saying, “Hear now, O Israel, is not my way equal? are not yours unequal?”

There was only one way of restoring peace; but it involved a sacrifice on God's part which the most sanguine had never dared to hope for. If the Lord of heaven and earth, veiling His glory, would assume our nature, would take the form of a servant, would stoop to the work of a subject, would die the death of a sinner, we might be saved—not otherwise; if He would leave heaven, we might enter it—not otherwise; if He would die, we might live—not otherwise; if He would enter the grave its captor, we might leave it its conquerors—not otherwise; If He, as our substitute, would fulfil the requirements of the law, both in doing our work and discharging our debt, both obeying and suffering in our stead, peace could be restored—not otherwise. For these ends God did not spare His Son, but gave Him up to death, “that whosoever believeth in him might not perish, but have everlasting life;” and the “set time” having come at length, Jesus descended on our world, to make peace through the blood of His cross—His angel train, ere they returned to heaven, holding a concert in the skies.

Dying, the Just for the unjust, He has made peace; and these are the easy terms, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.” How gladly should we accept them? If men

reject peace, what chance for them in war? "Hast thou an arm like God? Canst thou thunder with a voice like him?" "Let the potsherds strive with the potsherds of the earth; but woe to the man who striveth with his Maker!" He has proclaimed a truce—granting a suspension of arms and offering most generous proposals of peace. How should men improve the pause, and accept the overtures!—as eagerly seizing salvation through the cross of Christ as a drowning man life through the rope some kind hand flings within his reach. In warfare patriots have stood up gallantly against overwhelming odds, and, closing their broken ranks, have said, "Better fall on the field, better lose life than honor;" but when sinners, dropping the weapons of rebellion, yield themselves up to God, honor is not lost, but won, in a crown that fadeth not away. Brave men have said, "Better fight to the last, die with our swords in our hands, than become captives to pine away a weary, ignoble life within the walls of a prison;" but when the sinner gives himself up to God, he goes not to exile but home; not to chains and a dungeon, but to glorious freedom, a palace, and a throne. God asks you to give up your sins that they, not you, may be slain. It is of them, not of you, He says, "But those mine enemies which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before me!"

In these circumstances, oh, for the wisdom of her who showed herself on the city walls in the thick of the assault, crying to Joab, "Hear, hear, come near hither, I pray you, that I may speak with thee!" A woman's figure there, her voice sound-

ing above the thunder of the captains and the shouting, suspends the attack. Assailants and assailed alike rest on their arms ; and as one marked as a leader by his plume and bearing, covered with the dust and blood of battle, steps forward, she bends over the battlements to ask, "Art thou Joab?" "I am he," is the reply. "Then hear the words of thy handmaid," she cries ; "I am one of them that are peaceable and faithful in Israel : thou seekest to destroy a city and a mother in Israel !" He solemnly repudiates the charge. "Far be it from me," he answers, "that I should swallow up and destroy. The matter is not so : but a man of Mount Ephraim, Sheba, the son of Bichri, hath lifted up his hand against the king, against David : deliver him only, and I will depart from the city." She accepts the terms ; and saying, "Behold, his head shall be thrown to thee over the wall"—vanishes. Prompt in action as wise in counsel, she goes to the people, deals with them, sways the multitude to her will ; and ere the last hour of the brief truce has closed, a bloody head goes bounding over the wall. It rolls like a ball to the feet of Joab ; and in its grim and ghastly features they recognize the face of the son of Bichri. So Joab blows the trumpet, and the host retires from the walls, every man to his own tent. So let men deal with their sins. Let them die with the son of Bichri : they have "lifted up their hand against the King." Why should we spare them, and lose our souls ? By His precious blood Jesus has opened up a way to peace. He has come, but not to swallow up and destroy." Blessed Lord, He came to save, not to destroy.

"O earth, earth, earth," cried the prophet, "hear the word of the Lord ;" and be it known to the world's utmost bounds that God willeth not the death of the sinner, but rather that he would turn to Him and live. With her flaming sword, red with the blood of men and angels, Justice holds to us no other language but that of Joab, "Deliver up your sins only, and I will depart !" and, inspired of God with the wisdom that chooseth the better part, and maketh wise unto salvation, let us say, "Better my sins die than I ; better Satan be cast, than Jesus be kept out of it ; better strike off the heads of a thousand sins that have lifted up their hands against the King, than that I should fall—sparing my sins to lose my soul !"

PART V.

AHAB and Jezebel, two of the worst characters in sacred story, had a son ; and with such blood as theirs in his veins, no wonder that Joram, on succeeding to the throne of one parent, exhibited the vices of both. His mother does not seem to have had a drop of human-kindness in her breast. Yet he was not altogether dead to humanity, as appears by an incident which occurred during the siege that reduced his capital to the direst extremities. The ghastly aspect of a famished woman who throws herself in his way with a wild, impassioned, wailing cry, of "Help, my lord, O King !" touches him ; and he asks, "What aileth thee?" Stretching out a skinny arm to one pale and haggard as herself, she replies, with hollow voice, "This woman said unto me, Give thy son, that we may eat him to-day, and we will eat my son to-morrow. So we boiled my son, and did eat him : and I said unto her on the next day, Give thy son, that we may eat him ; and she hath hid her son." Struck with horror at the story, Joram rent his clothes. He had pity, but no piety.

"Why should ye be stricken any more ? ye will but revolt more and more." Never were these words, never was the fact that unsanctified afflictions have the same hardening effect on men which fire, that melts gold, has on clay, more

strikingly illustrated than on this occasion. So far from rending his heart with his garment, and humbling himself before the Lord, Joram flares up into fiercer rebellion ; and turning from these victims of the famine to his courtiers, he grinds his teeth to profane God's name and vow vengeance on his prophet, saying, "God do so and more also to me, if the head of Elisha the son of Shaphat shall stand on him this day." Impotent rage against the only man who could have weathered the storm, and saved the state ! The prophet's head stood on his shoulders when that of this son of a murderer—as Elisha called him—lay low in death in the dust of Naboth's vineyard. The day arrives which sees the cup of Joram's iniquity full, and that of God's patience empty—drained to the last drop. The chief officers of the army are sitting outside their barrack, when one wearing a prophet's livery approaches them. Singling out Jehu from the group, he says, I have an errand to thee, O captain ! The captain rises ; they pass in alone ; the door is shut ; and now this strange, unknown man, drawing a horn of oil from his shaggy cloak, pours it on Jehu's head. As if it had fallen on fire, it kindled up his smouldering ambition—so soon at least as this speech interpreted the act, "Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, I have anointed thee king over the people of this land. Thou shalt smite the house of Ahab thy master ; dogs shall eat Jezebel in the portion of Jezreel, and there shall be none to bury her." Having spoken so, the stranger opens the door, and flies. But faster flies God's vengeance. Ere his feet have borne the servant to Elisha's door,

the banner of revolt is up, unfurled ; troops are gathering to the sound of trumpets ; and soldiers, eager for change and plunder, are making the air ring to the cry, Jehu is king !

Launched like a thunderbolt at the house of Ahab, Jehu makes right for Jezreel with impetuous, impatient speed. A watchman on the palace tower catches afar the dust of the advancing cavalcade, and cries, I see a company ! Guilt, which sleeps uneasy even on downy pillows, awakens, on the circumstance being reported to him, the monarch's fears. A horseman is quickly despatched with the question, Is it peace ? Thus, pulling up his steed, he accosts the leader of the company, who, drawing no rein, replies, in a tone neither to be challenged nor disobeyed, What hast thou to do with peace ? Get thee behind me ! Failing the first's return, a second horseman gallops forth to carry the same question and meet the same reception. Sweeping on like a hurricane, the band is now near enough for the watchman to tell, "He came near unto them, and cometh not again ;" and also to add, as he marks how their leader is shaking the reins and lashing the steeds of his bounding chariot, "The driving is like the driving of Jehu, the son of Nimshi ; for he driveth furiously." Displaying a courage that seemed his only redeeming quality, or bereaved of sense, according to the saying, Whom God intends to destroy He first makes mad, Joram instantly throws himself into his chariot, advances to meet the band, and demands of its leader, "Is it peace, Jehu ?" "What peace," is the other's answer, "so long as the whoredoms of thy mother and her witchcrafts are so

many?" With the words that leave his lips an arrow leaves his bow to transfix the flying king—entering in at his back and passing out at his breast ; and when he is cast, a bloody corpse, into Naboth's vineyard, and dogs are crunching his mother's bones, and Jehu has climbed the throne, and Elisha walks abroad with his head safe on his shoulders, and the curtain falls on the stage of these tragic and righteous scenes, it was a time for the few pious men of that guilty land to sing, "Lo thine enemies, O Lord, lo thine enemies shall perish ; but the righteous shall flourish like the palm-tree : they shall grow like a cedar of Lebanon."

Such was the mission of Jehu, the son of Nimshi. How different that of Jesus, the Son of God ! They might have been identical ; presented at least grounds of comparison rather than grounds of striking contrast. Yet so remarkable is the contrast, that Jehu's mission—and therefore have we related the story—forms as effective a background to Christ's, as the black rain-cloud to the bright bow which spans it. The cause of the difference lies in God's free, gracious, sovereign mercy—in nothing else ; for had mankind, at the tidings that the Son of God, attended by a train of holy angels, was approaching, met Him on the confines of our world with Joram's question, "Is it peace ?" that question might justly have met with Jehu's answer, "What hast thou to do with peace ?"—what have you done to obtain it, or to deserve it ! Yet, glory be to God in the highest, it is peace—peace more plainly and fully announced in these most gracious

words, "It pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell ; and, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things to himself, whether they be things on earth, or things in heaven."

IX.

JESUS BRINGS PEACE TO THE SOUL.

HAVING reconciled us to God by the blood of His cross, Christ is "our Peace," as the apostle says. He is called so, first, because He restores us to a state of friendship with God ; and, secondly, because a sense of that fills the whole soul with a peace which passeth understanding. So, speaking of the righteousness which Christ wrought out for us, the prophet says, "The work of righteousness is peace"—His righteousness being the root, and our peace the fruit—that the spring, and this the stream. To describe for the comfort of the Church the constancy of the last and the fulness of the first, another prophet borrows two of nature's grandest images, "Thy peace shall be like a river, and thy righteousness like the waves of the sea"—the believer's peace flowing like a broad, deep stream, with life in its waters and smiling verdure on its banks ; and a Saviour's righteousness covering all his sins, as the waves do the countless sands of their shore, when, burying them out of sight, the tide converts the whole reach of dull, dreary sand into a broad liquid mirror, to reflect the light of the sky and the beams of the sun.

Christ's imputed righteousness is bestowed equally on all believers—none, the least any more than the

greatest sinner, being more justified than another. Feeling assured or not of their salvation, all His are equally safe—"those whom Thou hast given me I have kept, and none of them are lost." There is no such equal enjoyment among believers of peace in believing ; some walking all their days under a cloud, and some who walk in darkness and have no light, only reaching heaven, like a blind man guided homewards by the hand of his child, by their hold of the promise, "Who is he that feareth the Lord and obeyeth the voice of His servant, that walketh in darkness and hath no light ; let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay himself in his God." But where there is peace springing from a sense of forgiveness, of all the fruits of the Spirit that grow in Christ's fair garden, this is sweetest. Among the blessings enjoyed on earth, it has no superior, or rival even. It passeth understanding, says an apostle. Nor did David regard any as happy but those who enjoyed it—pronouncing "blessed," not the great, or rich, or noble, or famous, but "the man," whatever his condition, "whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered." And so he might. With this peace the believer regards death as the gate of life : enters the grave as a quiet anchorage from seas and storms ; and looks forward to the scene of final judgment as a prince to his coronation, or a happy bride to her marriage day. A sense of forgiveness lays the sick head on a pillow softer than downs ; lightens sorrow's heaviest burdens : makes poverty rich beyond the wealth of banks ; spoils death of his sting ; arms the child of God against the ills of life ; and, lifting him up above its trials, makes him like some lofty mountain, at whose

feet the lake may be lashed into foaming billows, and adown whose seamed and rugged sides clouds may fall in gloomy folds, but whose head, shooting up into the calm blue heavens, reposes in unbroken peace, rejoices in perpetual sunshine.

Happy such as obtain a firm hold of Christ, and, having made their calling and election sure, enjoy unclouded peace! Feeling that there is now no more condemnation for them, because they believe in Jesus, and walk not after the flesh but after the spirit, they see a change come on objects such as imparts pleasure and surprise in what are called dissolving views. Where death, with grim and grisly aspect, stood by the mouth of an open grave, shaking his fatal dart, we see an angel form opening with one hand the gate of heaven, and holding in the other a shining crown—from the face of God we see the features of an angry, stern, inexorable judge melt all away, and in room of an object of terror we behold the face and form of a kind, loving, forgiving Father, with open arms hastening to embrace us. The God of hope give you joy and peace in believing, is the prayer of the apostle—a prayer in many cases so fully answered that the dying saint has been borne away from all his earthly moorings; and, ready to part from wife and children, has exclaimed with Simeon when he held the infant Saviour in his joyful arms, “Now, Lord, lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation.”

“Be at peace among yourselves,” is a blessed injunction which an apostle lays on families, on friends, and on churches. In happy contrast to the storm which, hurtling through the troubled air, and

shaking doors and windows, goes raving round every corner of the house, let peace reign on the domestic hearth, and also within the church, when, like the ark of old, she drifts on the billows of a shoreless sea—God only at the helm.

It is good to be at peace with our brethren, but to be at peace with one's-self is better. At peace with conscience, one can afford, if God will have it so, to be at war with all men. It is painful, when we cannot be at peace with all men—to have enemies without ; but his case is infinitely worse who lodges an enemy in his own breast—in a guilty, uneasy conscience, in self-reproaches, in terror of death, in the knowledge that God and he are not friends, nor can be so, so long as he cherishes his sins. There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked. There cannot be. Drugged with narcotics you may sleep as quietly on a bed of thorns as of roses. Drugged with narcotics, you may lie down on the cold pavement, and fancy as you throw your arms around the curbstone that it is the wife of your bosom. Drugged with narcotics you may go to sleep in a cell with visions of home playing round the head that shall be capped for hanging to-morrow. But no more than I call these peaceful sights, can I apply the name of peace to the insensibility of a conscience seared by sin ; to the calmness or rather callousness of one who has allowed the devil to persuade him that God is too merciful to reckon with us for our transgressions. The peace we are to seek, and, seeking to pursue, ■ not of death, but life,—not that the lake presents in winter, when no life appears on its shores, nor sound breaks the silence of its frozen waters ;

but that of a lake which, protected from tempests by lofty mountains, carries life in its waters, beauty on its banks, and heaven mirrored in its unruffled bosom. Being justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Such is the peace which we are to seek—a peace which, springing from a sense of reconciliation through the blood of the Lamb and wrought within the soul by the in-dwelling of the Holy Spirit, has so raised the saint above all fears of death, and shed such a flood of glory around his dying head, that wicked men have turned from the scene to exclaim, May I die the death of the righteous, and may my last end be like his !

X.

JESUS SHALL BRING PEACE TO THE WORLD.

How many pages of history are written with the point of the sword—not with ink, but tears and blood? It is chiefly taken up with the recital of wars. What age has not been the era, what country the scene of bloody strifes? What soil does not hold the dust of thousands that have fallen by brothers' hands? Our glebes have been fattened with the bodies of the slain? On those fields where, with the lark carolling overhead, the peasant drives his ploughshare, other steel than the sickle has glanced, and other shouts have risen than those of happy reapers bearing some blushing, sun-browned maid on their broad shoulders at the Harvest Home. The tall gray stones, the hoary cairns, tell how on other days these quiet scenes were disturbed by the roar of battle, and lay red with another dye than that of heath or purple wild flowers. Go wherever our foot may wander, we find tokens of war; and select what age soever we may, since Abel fell beneath a brother's hand, we find in man's first death, and the earth's first long grave, a bloody omen of future and frequent crimes. What a commentary is human history on these words of Holy Scripture, "The whole creation groaneth, and travaileth in pain till now!—nor shall it cease to groan, or hail

the day of its redemption, till the Prince of Peace is enthroned in the heart of all nations, and the labors of missionaries have extended that kingdom to the ends of the earth, whose triumphs are bloodless—whose walls are Salvation and her gates Praise."

Without disparagement to the happy influence of education, the extension of commerce, and the efforts of benevolent men, the real Peace Society is the Church of God ; the olive branch which the Spirit, dove-like, is bearing on blessed wing to a troubled world, is the Word of God ; and the gospel's is the voice which, like Christ's on Galilee's waves, shall speak peace to a distracted earth, and change its wildest passions into a holy calm. Till all nations receive the Bible in its integrity and own it as their only rule of policy, till kings reign for Christ and lay their crowns at His feet, a lasting peace is an idle dream. Treaties will no more bind nations that lie under the influence of unsanctified passions, than chains him who dwelt among the tombs, and within whom dwelt a legion of devils. Till other and better days come, the best cemented peace is only a pause—a truce—an armistice ; the breathing-time of exhausted combatants. Alas, that it should be so : yet true it is, that that nation dooms itself to disaster, if not destruction, which, pursuing only the arts of peace, leaves its swords to rust, and its navies to rot, and forts with empty embrasures to moulder into ruins. The trumpet of the world's Jubilee has not yet sounded, nor have all the vials of the Apocalypse been emptied of the wrath of God. And so, till the nations have emerged from spiritual

darkness ; till God's Word is an open book, and duly honored in all lands ; till immorality has ceased to weaken the bonds of social happiness, discontent to rankle in the bosom of the people, and ambition to fire the breasts of kings, the world may expect ever and anon to hear the voice of Joel sounding out this trumpet call, " Prepare ye war ; wake up the mighty men ; let all the men of war draw near—beat your ploughshares into swords and your pruning-hooks into spears—put ye in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe."

Better days are coming—some think near at hand. Turning a seer's eye on futurity, Isaiah described them in the far distance—saw the reign of the Prince of Peace—Jesus crowned King of kings and Lord of lords—swords beaten into plough-shares and spears into pruning-hooks—every man, whether at hall or cottage door, sitting under the shade of his vine and fig-tree—the whole earth quiet, and at rest. And glad is the Church as, weary of strife and sin and sorrow, she looks up into the darksome sky, and cries, Watchman, what of the night ? to get a hopeful response,—to catch any sign, in break, or blush, or gray gleam however feeble, that seems to reply, The morning cometh ! Come, blessed morn, come, Prince of Peace—come, Lord Jesus—come quickly ! Let wars cease unto the ends of the earth ! Scatter Thou the people that delight in war.

The vision tarries, but come it shall. In answer to the cry of blood that rises to heaven with a different voice from that of Abel's, peace shall reign and wars shall cease. By the hands that men nailed to a cross God will break the bow, the

battle, and the spear—burning the chariot in the fire. And though any peace which our age may enjoy should be only a breathing-time, but a pause in the roar of the bloody tempest, let us improve it to remedy all wrongs at home ; to educate our ignorant and neglected masses ; to eradicate the vices that disgrace and degrade our nation ; to build up the Church wherever it lies in ruins ; to extend not so much Britain's empire as Christ's kingdom abroad, and so hasten forward the happy time when the Song of the Angels shall be echoed from every land, and the voices of the skies of Bethlehem shall be lost in the grander, fuller, nobler chorus of all nations, singing, Glory to God in the highest, peace on earth, good will toward men !

PART VI.

THOUGH the last to be dropped into its place, the keystone is of all the stones of an arch the first in importance ; the others span no flood, carry no weight, are of no value, without it. It gives unity to the separate parts, and locking all together, makes them one. Of such consequence to the other parts of the Angels' Song is its last clause. It was not simply Glory to God, nor peace on earth, but good will toward men, which made the angels messengers of mercy, and the news they brought tidings of great joy. Glory to God ! Amid the rush of the waters that drowned the world, and the roar of the flames that laid Sodom in ashes, they sang glory to God. God is glorious in acts of judgment as well as in acts of mercy—“the God of Glory thundereth.” So on shores strewn with the corpses of the dead, beside a sea which opened its gates for the escape of Israel and closed them on Egypt, burying king and bannered host beneath its whirling waves, Moses and Miriam cried, Sing ye to the Lord, for He hath triumphed gloriously ; the horse and his rider hath He cast into the sea ! Then the deep lifted up its voice, and all the waves of the sea sang Glory to God ! as, bearing the dead in on their foaming crests, they laid them at Moses' feet. And when that judgment comes to which these are but as the big

drops that prepare us for a burst of thunder and the rushing rain, when the great white throne is set, and the books are opened, and the Judge rises in awful majesty to pronounce words of doom, the voices of ten times ten thousand saints shall add, Amen ; and in an outburst of praise that drowns the wail of the lost, the whole host of angels shall sing, Glory to God ! With such ascription of praise Christ's heralds would have announced His advent, had He come not to save, but to destroy.

"Glory to God," the first clause of this song, does not, therefore, necessarily involve good will towards men ; and no more does the second, "peace on earth." Peace ! Peace was in the valley where the prophet stood with the grim wrecks of war around him,—friend and foe sleeping side by side, skeletons silently turning to dust, and swords to rust. Peace is in the battle-field when the last gun is fired, and, the last of the dying having groaned out his soul in a gush of blood, the heaving mass is still. Peace was on the sea and the storm suddenly became a calm, when the waves leaping up against the flying ship obtained their prey, and from the deck where he stood summoned by the voice, Arise, O thou that sleepest, and call upon thy God, Jonah was flung into the jaws of death. Peace was in that land he had ravaged of whom **men** said, "He made a solitude, and called it peace,"—all its homesteads lay in ashes, and its cities stood in silent ruins. Peace was in Israel, when, provoked by their sins, God cast His people out : swept them all into captivity. The land had its Sabbaths then. The Angels' Song might have

announced a similar, but greater, judgment—that, as a landlord clears his estate of turbulent, lawless, bankrupt tenants, God, who had repented long ago that He had made man, was at length coming to clear the earth of his guilty presence, and make room for better tenants; a purer, holier race. It is the last clause of this hymn, therefore, that gives it an aspect of mercy—the revenue of glory which God was to receive, and the peace which earth was to enjoy, flowing from that fountain of redeeming love which had its spring in God's good will. Of this, Christ was the divine expression, and angels were the happy messengers.

Happy messengers indeed! No wonder they hastened their flight to earth, and having announced the good tidings, lingered over the fields of Bethlehem, singing as they hovered on the wing. To announce bad news is the unenviable office often imposed on ministers of the gospel; and recollecting with what slow, reluctant steps my feet approached the house where I had to break to a mother the tidings of a wreck, and how her sailor boy with all hands had perished; or, in the news of a husband's sudden death, I had to plant a dagger in the heart of a young, bright, happy wife, I never have read the story of Absalom's tragic end, without wondering at the race between Ahimaaz and Cushi who should first carry the tidings to David. It had been easier, I think, to look the foe in the face and hear the roar of battle than see the old man's grief, and hear that heart-broken cry, "O Absalom, my son, my son Absalom, would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!" I can enter into the

feelings of the two Marys, when, to quote the words of Holy Scripture, "they departed quickly from the sepulchre with fear and great joy, and did run to bring the disciples word." I see them, as, regardless of appearances, and saluting no one, they press on, along the road, through the streets, with panting breath and gleaming eye and streaming hair and flying feet, striving who shall be first to proclaim the resurrection, and burst in on the disciples with the glad tidings, crying, "The Lord is risen!" Teaching the Churches how to strive, their only rivalry who shall first carry the tidings of salvation to heathen lands, I dare to say those holy women never took such bounding steps, nor sped on their way with such haste before. And never, I fancy, did angels leave the gates of heaven so fast behind them, pass suns and stars in downward flight on such rapid wing, as when they hastened to earth with the tidings of great joy. May we be as eager to accept salvation as they were to announce it! May the love of God find a responsive echo within our bosoms! Would that our wishes for His glory corresponded to His for our good, and that His good will toward us awoke a corresponding good will toward Him—felt in hearts glowing with zeal for Christ's cause, and expressed in lives wholly consecrated to His service.

In studying this, we shall now consider the persons to whom good will is expressed.

XI.

THE PERSONS TO WHOM GOOD WILL IS EXPRESSED.

IT is expressed to men—to all men ; so that if we are finally lost, the blame as well as the bane is ours. God has no ill will to us, or to any. He has no pleasure in the death of the wicked ; nor is He willing that any should perish, but that all should come to Him, and live. His good will embraces the world.

“ When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars which thou hast ordained ; what is man, that thou art mindful of him ? and the Son of man, that thou visitest him ? ” So said the royal psalmist. And, in a sense, time should only have deepened the astonishment which this question expresses. For man’s ideas of the magnificence of the heavens have grown with the course of ages ; and though the stars in the transparent atmosphere of Palestine shone with a brilliancy unknown to us, our conceptions of the heavens are grander and more true than David’s—thanks to the discoveries of modern science. As navigators, so soon as by help of the mariner’s compass they could push their bold prows into untravelled seas, were ever adding new continents to the land and new islands to the ocean, so since

the invention of the telescope, science has been discovering new stars in the heavens ; filling up their empty spaces with stellar systems, and vastly enlarging the limits of creation. And since every new orb has added to the lustre of Jehovah's glory, another world to His kingdom, another jewel to His crown, these discoveries, by exalting God still higher, have added point and power to the old question, "What is man, that thou art mindful of him ? and the Son of man, that thou visitest him ?"

Yet, apart from man's sinfulness, I cannot feel that he is beneath the regards of the Maker and Monarch of the starry heavens. I can fancy that an earthly sovereign who, dwelling apart from his people, is jealous of their intrusion within his palace gates, and sits enthroned amid an exclusive though brilliant circle of proud and powerful barons, may neither know nor care about the fortunes of lowly cottagers ; but there could be no greater mistake than out of such a man's character to weave our conceptions of God, or fancy that because we are infinitely beneath His rank, we are therefore beneath His notice. A glance at the meanest of His creatures refutes and rebukes the unworthy thought. It needs no angels from heaven to inform us that God cherishes good will to all the creatures of His hand, nor deems the least of them beneath His kind regards. Look at bird, or butterfly, or beetle ! Observe the lavish beauty that adorns His creatures, the bounty that supplies their wants, the care taken of their lives, the happiness, expressed in songs or merry gambols or mazy dances, which He has poured into their hearts. The whole earth is full of the glory of

God's infinite benignity and good will. Insignificant as I—a speck on earth, and earth itself but a speck in creation—seem to myself when, standing below the starry vault, I look up into the heavens, yet, apart from the thought that I am a sinner, I cannot say, What is man, that Thou art mindful of him? How can I, when I see Him mindful of the brood that sleep in their rocking nest, of the moth that flits by my face on muffled wing, of the fox that howls on the hill, of the owl that hoots to the pale moon from ivy tower or hollow tree? Are you not of more value than many sparrows? said our Lord. Fashioned originally after the divine image, with a soul outweighing in value the rude matter of a thousand worlds, able to rise on the wings of contemplation above the highest stars and hold communion with God himself, man, apart from his sinfulness, was every way worthy of divine good will; that God should be mindful of him.

But we are sinners—sinners by nature as well as practice; polluted; unholy; so unclean that our emblem is that hideous form which, from the crown of the head to the soles of the feet, is wounds and bruises and putrifying sores; and the news that God cherishes good will to such guilty creatures may well evoke the old, wondering cry, Hear, O heavens; be astonished, O earth! On recalling the happy days of early life, when, a child, he lay in his father's arms; a boy, he sat on his knee; a youth, he walked by his side—the tears that at parting streamed over the old man's cheeks—his kind counsels, his tender warnings, his warm kisses, and how he had stood and watched his departing steps till the brow of a hill or a turn of the road

hid him from view, the poor prodigal ventured to hope that his father would not turn him from his door ; for the sake of the past and of his mother in the grave, would grant him at least a servant's place. Weighed down by a sense of guilt, his hopes rose to no higher flight—expected nothing beyond a menial's office. To be received with open arms, to be welcomed back again like some youth who has gone abroad to win a fortune or be crowned with laurels—that his should be the fairest robe, the finest ring, the fatted calf—that instead of stealing in under the cloud of night to be concealed from strangers' eyes, the old house on his return should ring to the sound of music, and floors should shake to the dancers' feet, and the whole neighborhood should be called to rejoice with a father whose shame and sorrow he had been, was a turn of fortune he never dreamt of ; never dared to hope for. On the part of that loving, forgiving father, what amazing good will ! But how much more amazing this which God proclaimed by the lips of angels, and proved by the death of His beloved Son !

I have known fathers and mothers who were sorely tried by wayward, wicked children—I have seen their gray hairs go down with sorrow to the grave. With hearts bleeding under wounds from the hands of one they loved, I have seen them welcome the grave ; saying as they descended into its quiet rest, “the days of my mourning are ended.” It is a horrid crime to wring tears from such eyes, to crush such hearts : but was ever patient, hoping, loving parent tried as we have tried our Father in heaven ? Not without reason

does He ask, "If I be a father, where is mine honor? if I be a master, where is my fear?" And who that thinks of his sins, their guilt, their number, and, as committed against infinite love and tender mercy, their unspeakable atrocity, but will acknowledge the truth of these words, "Because I am God, and not man, therefore the children of men are not consumed"—just as it is because the ship rides by a cable, and not a cobweb, that, when sails are rent, and yards are gone, and breakers are foaming on the reef, she mounts the billows and survives the storm. That we are not suffering the pains of hell, that we have hopes of heaven and ever shall be there, we owe not to our good works, but to God's good will; to that only. Till converted, man does not desire this good will; and never deserves it. We have no claim to it whatever. It is "not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy God saves us, by the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Ghost"—therefore His good will has no root in any good works of ours. A sacred mystery, we may apply to it the words which Job, contemplating the grand mysteries of nature, applied to our earth when, seeing this great globe floating in ethereal space, sustained by no pillars, nor suspended by any chain that linked it to the skies, he said, *Thou hast hung it upon nothing!*

XII.

THE PERSON WHO EXPRESSES "GOOD WILL."

THE person is God—He who spake by holy men of old, speaking here by the lips of angels. Where there is a will, there is a way, is a brave and admirable proverb. Yet, though comparatively true in most cases, to some it is altogether inapplicable. Look, for example, at the women who, when the men had turned cowards, boldly follow our Lord to Calvary, bewailing and lamenting Him! What tears they shed, what a wail they raise, when the door opens, and, surrounded by armed guards, Jesus comes forth from the Judgment Hall, bleeding, bound, crowned with thorns. When He sank down on the street under the weight of the cross, and His blessed head lay low in the dust, had there been a chance of saving Him, how had they rushed to His help; and, giving their naked breasts to the Roman spears, burst through the circle to rescue Him; to die with Him rather than desert Him. But they were helpless. Their good will availed the loved object nothing—beyond this, that the sympathy flowing in their tears and expressed in their looks, somewhat soothed the sorrows of His heart, and fell like balm drops on His smarting wounds.

Again, what good will did David bear to Jona-

than ! Did Jonathan love David as his own soul ? and under circumstances calculated to dissolve all common friendships, and work such change on the heart as wine suffers when it turns into vinegar, did Jonathan's sentiments continue unchanged, his affection unabated to the last ? His love was strong as death ; many waters could not quench it. But it was amply requited. David proved that with his harp ; had he been present on that fatal field where the bow of Jonathan was broken, he had proved it with his sword. With what a lion spring had he answered Jonathan's cry for help ; how had he bestrode his fallen friend, covering him with his battered shield ; mowing a way through the ranks of the Philistines, how had he borne him, off to a place of safety, or falling in the attempt, left others to compose their elegy, and sing, They were pleasant in their lives, and in death they were not divided ! God is a very present help in time of trouble ; but there was no help for Jonathan in David. Far away from that bloody field, his good will availed Jonathan nothing—beyond embalming his rare virtues in immortal song, and in an imperishable lament raising an imperishable monument to the memory of a man whose love to him was wonderful, passing the love of women.

Again, what good will in his father's heart to Esau ? But the old man's hands are tied. Fresh from the chase, and ignorant of what has happened in his absence, Esau approaches Isaac, saying, Let my father arise and eat of his son's vension, that thy soul may bless me ! Who art thou ? says the blind old man—astonished that any should ask

what he has already given away. Recognizing the beloved voice which replied, I am thy son, thy first-born Esau, and dreading some dire calamity, Isaac trembled exceedingly, crying, "Who? where is he that hath taken vension and brought it me; and I have eaten of all before thou camest, and have blessed him? yea, and he shall be blessed." By the basest, cruellest fraud, Jacob has possessed himself of the blessing; and if their mother, his own partner in guilt, was watching the issue of this perfidious plot, how had it pierced her heart to hear Esau, when the truth flashed on his mind and he saw the treasure stolen, cry, "with a great and exceeding bitter cry, Bless me, even me also, O my father!" The strong man, the bold hardy hunter, lifted up his voice and wept; seeking repentance, as the apostle says—to get Isaac to undo the deed—with tears, but found it not. What availed his father's good will to him, his favorite son? What was done must stand. The blessing was gone; and Isaac, though he had the will, had no way to recall it.

But what need to ransack old history for examples? How often have our hearts overflowed with good will, yet we could only weep with them that wept—pity sorrows we could not soothe, wants we were powerless to relieve? Tears we might give, but they could not clothe the naked, or feed the hungry, or save the dying, or recall the dead, or close the wounds which death had made. In dying chambers how are we made painfully, bitterly to feel that man's power is not commensurate with his will? What good will, what tender affection toward some dear, beloved object! yet,

as we hung over the dying couch, all we could do was to moisten the speechless lips, to wipe the clammy sweat from death's cold brow and watch the sinking pulses of life's ebbing tide. What would we not have done to meet the wishes of the eye that, when speech was gone, turned on us imploring, never-to-be-forgotten looks ! Alas, our good will availed them nothing !

Such recollections, by the contrast which they present to God's good will, greatly enhance its preciousness. "His favor is life, His loving-kindness is better than life." Where God has a will, God always has a way. At the throne of divine grace, none had ever to shed Esau's tears, or cry with him, Hast thou but one blessing, O my father ? Our Father in heaven is affluent in blessings, plenteous in redemption, abundant in goodness and in truth. Who ever turned an imploring eye on God, and brought to prayer the earnestness of him that bends the knee to yon blind old man, but became in time the happy object of God's loving, saving mercy. Let men trust in the Lord. In the name of Christ let them throw themselves on His mercy. What though they cannot see it ? It is around them, like the invisible but ambient air on which the eagle, with an awful gulf below, throws herself from her rocky nest in fearless freedom, and with expanded wings. So let men, trusting in God's faithful word, spread out the wings of faith, and cast them on His good will. Wrapping the world round in an atmosphere of mercy, it shall sustain their weight, and bear them aloft, till, ascending into the calm regions of Christian hope, they bathe their eyes in the beams of the Sun of

Righteousness, and feel their feet firmly planted
on the Rock of Ages.

But let one thing be remembered, this, namely, that God will not save any against their will. Let us therefore seek, and seek till we obtain, a change of heart. He draws, not drives—will not force any into heaven—nor be served by the hands of a slave. If I would not have a sullen, crouching slave wait at my table, work in my house, stand in my poor presence, much less He who says, Give me thy heart, my son ! He makes His people willing in the day of His power. Softened in the flames of Divine love, their stubborn wills yield to His, and, under the hand of His Holy Spirit and the hammer of His mighty word, take the fashion and form of His own. Thus, His will and their wills being brought into perfect harmony, His people feel their duty to be their delight, and regard His holy service as no irksome bondage, but the truest liberty and highest honor.

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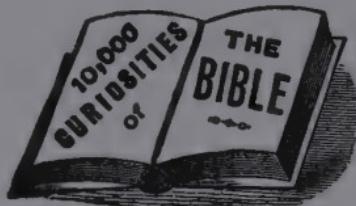
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